

## **The southern flank of NATO, 1951-1959: military strategy or political stabilisation?**

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**THE SOUTHERN FLANK OF NATO, 1951-1959.  
MILITARY STRATEGY OR POLITICAL  
STABILISATION?**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **ABSTRACT**

In 1951-52, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation established the Southern Flank, a strategy for the defence of the eastern Mediterranean in the Cold War involving Greece, Italy and Turkey. Among its many aims, the Southern Flank sought to mobilize Greece and Turkey as allies and integrate them into the Western defence system. Throughout 1950s, the alliance developed the Southern Flank and in 1959, it was finally stabilized as fractious Greek-Turkish relations were improved by the temporary settlement over Cyprus. These events are the focus of this thesis. It examines, among other things, the initial negotiations of 1951-52, the Southern Flank's structure and function and relative value in NATO's overall policy, and its response to the challenges of the eastern Mediterranean in the early Cold War. It explores not only the military aspects of the Southern Flank (e.g. the establishment of its headquarters and NATO's command structure; the special role of each member state; military planning and the lack of unity in command) but also the more controversial political aspects. Hence, it analyses the admission of Greece and Turkey to NATO, the short-lived military cooperation between these states and Yugoslavia during 1953-55 and the deterioration in Greek-Turkish relations from 1955 due to Cyprus. It also focuses on the part played by other major members of the alliance, principally the United States and Britain, in Southern Flank politics and strategy. Thus, it considers how the US and UK viewed the power balance between the three Southern Flank members and how the Americans sought to influence affairs through financial, military and technical assistance, including the construction of US bases in Greece and Turkey. More generally, the thesis also assesses the threat posed to the Southern Flank at various points by rising tensions in the Middle East.

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My greatest thanks must go to my supervisor, Dr James Ellison, for his invaluable guidance and advice. Many thanks are due to two dear friends and colleagues, Emmanuel Koumas and Eirini Karamouzi, for their continuous support and help, as well as to Nadia Orfanidou, Vasia Oikonomou and Grigoria Kalyvioti for their encouragement.

Last, but certainly not least, my parents and my sister deserve my warmest thanks for their constant faith and support during my long student life, and it is to them that this thesis is dedicated.

## **List of Abbreviations**

ACE: Allied Command Europe

AC&W: Air Control and Warning system

AFMED: Allied Forces Mediterranean [NATO]

AFSOUTH: Allied Forces Southern Europe [NATO]

BJSM: British Joint Staff Mission (in Washington) [UK]

CAS: Chief of the Air Staff [UK]

CENTO: Central Treaty Organisation

CIGS: Chief of the Imperial General Staff [UK]

CINCAFMED: Commander in Chief Allied Forces Mediterranean [NATO]

CINCMED: Commander in Chief Mediterranean [UK]

CINCMELF: Commander in Chief Middle East Land Forces [UK]

CINCNELM: Commander in Chief Naval Forces Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean [US]

CINCSOUTH: Commander in Chief Allied Forces Southern Europe [NATO]

CNO: Chief of Naval Operations [US]

COMAIRSOUTH: Commander Air Forces Southern Europe [NATO]

COMLANDSOUTH: Commander Land Forces Southern Europe [NATO]

COMALANDSOUTHEAST: Commander Land Forces South-Eastern Europe [NATO]

COMSTRIKFORSOUTH: Commander Striking Forces Southern Europe [US/NATO]

COS: Chiefs of Staff [UK]

C&R: Control and Reporting system

D-Day: the unnamed day on which an operation commences or is due to commence; this may be the commencement of hostilities or any other operation

HALFSEE: Headquarters Allied Land Forces South-Eastern Europe [NATO]

JAMMAT: Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey [US]

JCS: Joint Chiefs of Staff [US]

JUSMAGG: Joint United States Military Aid Group to Greece [US]

LANDSOUTHEAST: Land Forces South-Eastern Europe [NATO]

LOC: Lines of Communication

MAAG: Military Assistance Advisory Group [US]

M-day: is the day on which mobilisation commences or is due to commence

MEC: Middle East Command

MEDO: Middle East Defence Organisation

M+15(/+30, etc): referring to 15 (or 30, etc) days following the mobilisation day

NAC: North Atlantic Council [NATO]

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NSC: National Security Council [US]

SACEUR: Supreme Allied Commander Europe [NATO]

SACLANT: Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic [NATO]

SACME: Supreme Allied Commander Middle East

SETAF: Southern European Task Force [NATO]

SHAPE: Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe [NATO]

SIXATAF: Sixth Allied Tactical Air Force [NATO]

SLOC: Sea Line(s) Of Communication

SOFA: Status of Forces Agreement

STRIKFORSOUTH: Naval Striking and Support Forces Southern Europe [US]

TO&E: Table of Organization and Equipment (a document published by the US Department of Defense which prescribes the organisation, staffing, and equipage of units).

### *Archives*

ADM: Admiralty records

APA: Athanassios Politis Archive

CAB: Cabinet records

C-M: Memorandum to the North Atlantic Council

C-R: North Atlantic Council Summary Record

C-VR: Verbatim Record of North Atlantic Council Ministerial Meeting

DDEL: Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

DEFE: Ministry of Defence records

DDRS: Declassified Document Retrieval System

FO: Foreign Office records

FRUS: Foreign Relations of the United States

HAGFM: Historical Archive of the Greek Foreign Ministry

IPA: Ioannis Politis Archive

KKA: Konstantinos Karamanlis Archive

MC: Military Committee document

MCM: Military Committee Memorandum

MRC: Military Representatives Committee document

NARA: National Archives and Records Administration

NATO: NATO Archive

PO: Private Office of the NATO Secretary General document

PREM: Prime Minister Papers

SG: Standing Group document

SGM: Standing Group Memorandum

TNA: The National Archives

WO: War Office records



## **List of Maps**

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1.1 Map of the Mediterranean Sea



1.2 Map of Turkey





1.3 Map of Italy





1.4 Map of Greece

## INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis – ‘The Southern Flank of NATO, 1951-1959: Military Strategy or Political Stabilisation?’ – is defined chronologically. The Southern Flank was created in 1951 by the NATO powers and initially comprised only of Italy. There were, however, concurrent negotiations for its expansion to include Greece and Turkey once those states had been admitted to the Atlantic Alliance. Once that had been achieved, the strength of the Southern Flank was jeopardised until a short-lived settlement of the Cyprus problem enabled a temporary revival of Greek-Turkish relations and the restoration of normalcy in the region by the end of the 1950s. These are the events at the centre of this thesis which is a historical study focusing on political-diplomatic as well as a military history. It covers the many aspects that occupied NATO’s Southern Flank in its first nine years. Among them are the reasons why NATO sought its enlargement just three years after its formation; the various stages of the negotiations held in 1951-1952 leading to the final admission of Greece and Turkey and the part played by other major members of the alliance, such as the United States and Britain; the creation of Southern Flank’s headquarters and NATO’s structure in this area; the function of the Greek Armed Forces within the framework of a military alliance of the major Western states, only few years after the end of the Greek civil war; the role and particular importance of each member of the Southern Flank (Italy, Greece, Turkey) in NATO’s strategy; the offer of American military, financial and technical assistance to the above three states and the construction of the American bases on their soil; the military planning for the role of the Southern Flank in the event of crisis or conflict with the Eastern bloc; the impact of the lack of unity in

the command of the Southern Flank and the comparison with the other NATO commands; the level of integration of the armies of the Southern Flank, which did not appear to be satisfactory; the short-lived military cooperation of Greece and Turkey with Titoist Yugoslavia during 1953-1955, a unique phenomenon of formal alliance between a communist and two Western states in the Cold War; and the impact of the dramatic deterioration of Greek-Turkish relations from 1955 onwards because of the dispute over Cyprus.

This thesis puts emphasis not on the national policies of the members of the Southern Flank but on the structure and function of the Southern Flank as a whole, the relative value of the Southern Flank in NATO's overall policy, the alliance's response to the challenges of this specific region, and the role of the Naples Headquarters. The existing literature on these subjects is far from extensive: relevant texts either focus on only one country (for example, Greece) or on one aspect (Greek-American relations). Although there has been an interesting research on Greece and Turkey and their relations with the alliance, this work deals with the level of national policy rather than with the function of these states within the structure of the alliance. The same applies to the Italian case. It should be stressed that the aim of this thesis is not to give a full account of all aspects and events. Rather, the ultimate goal is to provide, to the extent possible, a comprehensive narration and analysis of the Southern Flank politics and strategy in the 1950s, which might serve as a starting point for the research of more specific subjects in the future. Moreover, this thesis does not deal with issues such as communal relations and friction between US personnel serving in (or visiting) Italy, Greece, and Turkey and the local population, or the economic or social consequences of US presence in the Southern Flank countries. Hopefully, these interesting matters,

which have received very little, if any, research so far, will be studied by other historians.

NATO's history has not yet been served by an extensive literature and the few books are mainly general histories of the alliance.<sup>1</sup> Historians have concentrated even less on the Southern Flank. Firstly, scholars have largely been interested in transatlantic relations, in US-UK relations and NATO-French relations, in the role of Germany, and in nuclear affairs. Secondly, historians of the early Cold War period focused on the Middle East and the Cyprus question rather on the Southern Flank as such. However, the history of the Southern Flank in the 1950s is colourful. To name three examples, NATO proved more or less unable to devise an effective defensive strategy for the region to cover Italy, Greece and Turkey and relied almost exclusively on nuclear deterrence; therefore, NATO remained militarily weak in the Eastern Mediterranean. Moreover, in 1951-2 Anglo-American differences over the command setup in the southern region clearly demonstrated that the US-UK 'special relationship' should not be taken for granted in the early Cold War period. Last but not least, the deep rupture in UK-Greek and Greek-Turkish relations over Cyprus after 1955, which constituted the first intra-NATO crisis, and NATO's inability to intervene and mediate successfully, revealed the alliance's political weaknesses early on in its history.

During the Cold War the security problems of NATO's Southern Flank were particularly complex and profoundly different in military and political terms from the Northern and Central areas of the Atlantic Alliance. First of all, in northern and central Europe NATO and the Soviet bloc (from 1955 the Warsaw Pact) were facing each

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, see Vojtech Mastny, 'The New History of the Cold War Alliances', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4/2 (spring 2002), pp.55-84.

other along a well-defined geographic, political and military dividing line. On the contrary, the boundaries between the two alliances were less clear-cut in the Southern Flank, not only because of the existence of neutral Yugoslavia, but also because some states of the Middle East bordering with Turkey, though not members of one or the other coalition, proved open to Soviet political, economic and military penetration. Moreover, in the Southern Flank, contrary to the situation in Western Europe, serious internal differences and disputes emerged from 1955 to early 1959 (and again in the following decades) between two members of the alliance, Greece and Turkey, which often paralyzed the Southern Flank.

One of the primary aims of this thesis is to utilize as many archives as possible. Of particular importance is the full use of the NATO archives in Brussels (International Staff – the political archive of the alliance, and Military Staff – the alliance's military archive). Until this point, very few studies (either articles or books and theses) have made use of the NATO archives, despite the fact that its holdings are easily accessible and well classified in both the digital and printed guides. As this thesis deals primarily with NATO, its official records are of paramount importance. As will be seen, the material found at the archives is very significant, not least because since NATO is a multinational alliance, the NATO archives illuminate, at least to some extent, the attitude of all members of the alliance towards the Southern Flank and its problems.

The British National Archives constituted the other most important archival collection. Foreign Office (FO) and Ministry of Defence (DEFE) records have been used extensively. In addition, significant information has been found in Cabinet (CAB) records and the papers of the prime minister (PREM), as well as in Admiralty



(ADM) and War Office (WO) files. There is no need to establish here the usefulness of research in the UK National Archives at Kew. Britain had traditionally been a major power in the Mediterranean and in the 1950s, although eclipsed by the United States in Europe, still had a variety of interests in the region, including the holding of the NATO Mediterranean command. Furthermore, London tried to shape developments in 1951-2, without much success, to regain some of its decreasing leverage in the Eastern Mediterranean and achieve some coordination between the Southern Flank and the defence of the Middle East. Britain also had extensive connections with the policy-making elites of the three members of the Southern Flank and therefore an important amount of vital information. Last but not least, Britain was a key actor during the Cyprus dispute in 1954-9 which nearly brought the Southern Flank to the brink of dissolution (the National Archives hold an enormous amount of material regarding this issue).

Another primary actor in NATO and the Mediterranean was, by dint of its superpower status and interests, the United States. US documents are extremely important in this thesis, because the United States was the leading power of NATO, it exerted influence in all three members of the Southern Flank, it provided military and economic aid to them, while the US Sixth Fleet played a major role in the military planning of the alliance in the Mediterranean region. The records of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas, were very helpful, especially the Eisenhower, Dulles, Gruenther and Norstad papers, as well as various National Security Council (NSC) records. Furthermore, a vast amount of evidence was found in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington, Maryland. Emphasis was placed on State Department papers (of both decimal and lot files) and

on papers of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (specifically of its Chairman in 1953-7, Admiral Arthur Radford). On the other hand, the published collection of the US government *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* volumes was a valuable supplementary source. Selected documents of the DDRS (Declassified Document Retrieval System) e-sources were also used.

Finally, research for this thesis was extended to published and unpublished Greek archival sources, including the Historical Archive of Greek Foreign Ministry, which is accessible till the year 1954 (although now material for subsequent years is being released). Other unpublished document collections include the Athanasios Politis Archive, which is deposited in the Historical Archive of Greek Foreign Ministry (Athanasios Politis was the Greek ambassador in Washington from 1950 to 1954 – and beforehand served in Moscow), and the Ioannis Politis Archive (Ioannis Politis was a prominent leading diplomat and permanent Under Secretary of State in 1950-1), both of which are deposited in the Mpenaki Museum. There is also a sizeable twelve-volume published collection of selected documents in Svolopoulos, Konstantinos (ed.), *Konstantinos Karamanlis: archeio, gegonota kai keimena* [Constantinos Karamanlis: archive, events and texts]. Unfortunately, this Greek source base has not been matched by a Turkish equivalent as no Turkish archival sources are accessible to historians for the period after 1910s. Moreover, this thesis has not used Italian material given its central focus on NATO sources, those of the alliance's two leading powers (the UK and US) and the two states which initiated most of the Southern Flank's military and political history in the 1950s.

**i) *The role of geography in the Southern Flank and the consequent strategic implications***

Allied strategy in the Southern Flank region was influenced disproportionately by geography and this was always mirrored in the assessments of the NATO officials. The area of responsibility of Allied Forces Southern Europe (AFSOUTH) did not present a unified theatre and the development and implementation of a single and comprehensive strategy was a herculean task.<sup>2</sup> On the Southern Flank the sea predominated over the land factor, and the two blocs had common land borders only on the Greek-Bulgarian, Turkish-Bulgarian and Soviet-Turkish frontiers.<sup>3</sup> In essence, the Southern Flank was divided into three major land compartments and the ‘greater’ Mediterranean Sea (meaning the Mediterranean itself, along with the Aegean Sea and other bodies of water adjacent to Southern Europe, the western Middle East and eastern North Africa). The three main land sub-regions were the Italian Peninsula, the Balkans and Eastern Turkey, and although related, they were operationally separate. The common factor was that throughout almost the whole of NATO’s Southern land frontier, the terrain is mountainous; only in the Northern Italian Plain, in Thrace and on the Anatolian Plateau it was (and still is) suitable for large scale land operations and the deployment of mechanized formations.<sup>4</sup>

Italy had no frontier with enemy territory, and a land attack against it was only likely through Austria or Yugoslavia into the Northern Italian Plain. In the North

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<sup>2</sup> John Chipman, ‘NATO and the Security Problems of the Southern Region: From the Azores to Ardahan’, in John Chipman (ed.), *NATO’s Southern Allies: Internal and External Challenges* (London & New York: Routledge, 1988), pp.8-52.

<sup>3</sup> Leopoldo Nuti and Maurizio Cremasco, ‘Linchpin of the Southern Flank? A General Survey of Italy in NATO, 1949-1999’, in Gustav Schmidt (ed.), *A History of NATO: The First Fifty Years* (London, 2001), v.3, pp. 317-37.

<sup>4</sup> David Shlapak et al., *Sample Campaign Plans and Staff Assessments for NATO’s Southern Region* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1989), p.1.

this plain was covered by the wide and easily-defended Italian Alps, but to the East the defence of Italy was prejudiced by the fact that the Julian Alps, with their strategic gaps lay beyond the Yugoslav border.<sup>5</sup> The most vulnerable sector of the Italian frontier was the 'Gorizia Gap' (known in antiquity as the 'Barbarian Gate') which was the coastal narrow plain at the northern corner of the Adriatic Sea. This was accessible through Ljubljana and Rijeka (Fiume) and offered the only terrain suitable for large-scale tank operations in the border regions. The only continuous frontal obstacle was the lower Isonzo River.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, though the Isonzo River offered a secondary defence line in Italian territory, the course of events in Northern Yugoslavia would greatly affect the defence of Northern Italy in case of war.

The coastal zone of the Northern Aegean Sea linked Greece and Turkey, covered their flanks, and provided access to the Mediterranean. This zone in Greek Thrace, in the West, was dominated by the mountains of Southern Bulgaria, but was also too thin and lacked depth for effective defence. The principal land approach to Greece, and Salonika in particular, ran through the Vardar (Axios) Valley in Southern Yugoslavia, while the secondary one ran from Bulgaria along the Struma River in Greek eastern Macedonia. According to NATO analysts the Soviet bloc's effort in the Balkans was likely to be directed first at the Danube Valley against Yugoslavia. It was estimated that after the drive in Yugoslavia, attacking Soviet bloc forces would be directed through North-western Yugoslavia towards Italy and through Southern Yugoslavia towards Greece, aiming to secure bases on the shores of the Mediterranean from which Allied sea communications could be seriously threatened. The latter drive would probably be coordinated with forces attacking Greece directly from Bulgaria.

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<sup>5</sup> NATO/M.C.14/1(Final), Report on Strategic Guidance, 9-December-1952.

<sup>6</sup> Faringdon, Hugh, *The Map of Confrontation: The Strategic Geography of NATO and the Warsaw Pact* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), p.189.

Though Yugoslavia was unlikely to be able to hold its Northern Plains, it was expected to withdraw effective forces into the mountains and continue fighting. Turkish Thrace was highly exposed both by thrusts of armoured and mechanised forces from Bulgaria and by seaborne attack from the Black Sea.<sup>7</sup>

As regards mainland Turkey, the NATO officials considered that the Soviets would probably devote considerable effort to the conquest of the country, to deprive the Allies of the air bases and other facilities in Turkey and undermine their dominating position on the Black Sea; moreover, by striking at Turkey they could interdict or at least harass the direct approaches to the Middle East. The possession or neutralisation of Turkey would give the USSR access to the Mediterranean and greater freedom of operation against the Middle East. In particular, it would threaten important Allied oil producing areas, as well as extend the Soviet bloc's air warning cover and the range of its air operation. It was estimated that simultaneous enemy attacks on Turkey would consist of a main attack in the Balkans into Turkish Thrace with the object of making an assault crossing of the straits and a drive into Anatolia while another thrust from the Caucasus should be expected; a further threat, in the form of seaborne operations across the Black Sea against Samsun, was also regarded as possible. The danger of possible envelopment by enemy forces moving through Persian Azerbaijan and turning westwards across Northern Iraq and Syria towards Iskenderun was also apparent.<sup>8</sup>

The main strategic factor which influenced NATO's strategy on the Southern Flank was that the only element which unified the three main sub-theatres of the

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<sup>7</sup> NATO/M.C.14/1(Final), Report on Strategic Guidance, 9-December-1952; also Shlapak et al., *Sample Campaign*, p.1.

<sup>8</sup> NATO/M.C.14/1(Final), Report on Strategic Guidance, 9-December-1952.

region was the Mediterranean Sea, where NATO enjoyed naval and air superiority. Indeed, the Mediterranean embraced allied territories in Western Europe, Southern Europe and Turkey. The security of allied sea and air lines of communication with those territories and with North Africa and the Middle East depended on the control of the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean Sea also afforded great opportunity for exploiting the flexibility of the naval arm in support of the land battle, both by amphibious operations and by the employment of naval striking forces. Except possibly in Albania, the Soviets could not possess any naval or air bases on the Mediterranean coast and apart from any submarines already deployed in the area, Soviet naval vessels would have to penetrate the narrow entrances from the Atlantic or the Black Sea, and would therefore become easy prey to the powerful Anglo-American naval and air forces. The enemy air threat over the Mediterranean, however, was likely to be significant. The strategic concept governing the employment of allied forces in the Mediterranean Sea would therefore be to control its waters, to defend the littoral of allied and friendly territories (including the islands of Crete, Sicily, Corsica and Sardinia) and to employ available forces, both offensively and defensively, in support of the overall strategy in Southern Europe and Turkey.<sup>9</sup>

During the 1950s, the US Sixth Fleet remained the most powerful allied force in the Southern region. This was consonant with the US Navy's effort not only to support the allied ground forces but also to develop long-range strike capabilities that would enable it to contribute significantly to a prospective (land) war against the Soviets.<sup>10</sup> For this last purpose, the use of inland seas (like the Mediterranean) was imperative. The USN had realised very quickly the potential of atomic weapons in

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Jakub Grygiel, 'The Dilemmas of US Maritime Supremacy in the Early Cold War', *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 28/2, (April 2005), pp.187-216.

enhancing the firepower and destructive effectiveness of the US maritime aviation.<sup>11</sup> The adoption of such a new role would secure a primary position for the US Navy in a new geostrategic environment which had changed drastically after 1945.<sup>12</sup> Although until the early 1950s atomic weapons were too large and heavy to be delivered by carrier-based aircraft, soon NATO acquired sea-based nuclear capability in the Mediterranean: by the end of 1951 atomic bombs had been deployed to the carriers of the Sixth Fleet. In the event of war these would be delivered by P2V-3C and AJ-1 aircraft. The potential targets were various Soviet military facilities and war sustaining resources within 600 miles distance of the Mediterranean, mainly around the Caucasus (this was the case particularly from 1954 onwards, when NATO strategy came into line with the US government's 'New Look' strategy). Moreover, technological developments, such as the laying down of the *Forrestal* class super carriers from 1954 onwards (which were able to launch jet aircraft), and the construction of smaller and lighter atomic devices, enabled the Sixth Fleet's naval aviation to launch tactical atomic airstrikes, as well as to perform conventional close air support, in order to blunt any Soviet-bloc advances in NATO soil.<sup>13</sup>

However, the role and value of the US Sixth Fleet and NATO domination in Eastern Mediterranean, though crucial, should not be overestimated. Land power must always be confronted on land, and control of the Eastern Mediterranean alone was insufficient to defeat a Soviet-bloc land campaign in Greek and Turkish Thrace and eastern Anatolia: the Greek and Turkish land and air forces had the task to check a

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<sup>11</sup> Joel Sokolsky, *Seapower in the Nuclear Age. The United States Navy and NATO 1949-80* (London & New York: Routledge, 1991), p.58.

<sup>12</sup> Grygiel, 'The Dilemmas', pp.187-216.

<sup>13</sup> Sokolsky, *Seapower*, pp.58-59; Grygiel, 'The Dilemmas', pp.187-216; Dean Allard, 'An Era of Transition, 1945-1953', pp.290-303, and Floyd Kennedy, 'The Creation of the Cold War Navy, 1953-1962', pp.304-326, in Kenneth Hagan (ed.), *In Peace and War: Interpretations of American Naval History, 1775-1978* (Westport & London: Greenwood Press, 1978).

Soviet (and/or Bulgarian) advance towards those two AFSOUTH's land sub-theatres but could only count on very modest US/NATO support.<sup>14</sup> Although those two countries (and Italy) had quite numerous armies – especially in comparison to other NATO members – their armed forces lacked advanced weaponry and technical staff throughout the period under examination. Furthermore, despite the emphasis which the US Navy was placing on power projection ashore, one could justifiably doubt the real capability of the Sixth Fleet's naval aircraft to contribute decisively to NATO campaign in Eastern Mediterranean, at least during a crucial initial phase. A hundred and eighty or so aircraft would probably make no real difference, at least in a conventional campaign, against the powerful Soviet and satellite air forces, particularly since most of the naval aircraft would be kept for the Sixth Fleet's self-protection. The same applies to the actual value of the fleet's amphibious element (comprised of two thousand men of the US Marine Corps).

Indeed, the experience of the Second World War had demonstrated that naval aviation could efficiently project power from sea to shore by undertaking 'traditional' missions such as close air support, interdiction and interception, on the condition that it enjoyed considerable numerical superiority and/or that the opponent air force was neutralized. Conversely, land-based aircraft could inflict massive damage to a fleet lacking adequate air cover – and warships, in particular capital ships, are high-value assets that are difficult to replace.<sup>15</sup> It is important to stress that at least until the mid-1950s, overall NATO air forces were weak, particularly as regards the shortage of

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<sup>14</sup> John Chipman, 'Allies in the Mediterranean: Legacy of Fragmentation', in John Chipman (ed.), *NATO's Southern Allies*, pp.53-85.

<sup>15</sup> Ian Speller, 'Naval Warfare', in David Jordan et al., *Understanding Modern Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.122-77.



fighters and the inadequacy of the air control and warning (AC&W) systems.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, in the event of war with the Soviet bloc, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and the Commander-in-Chief Southern Europe (CINCSOUTH) would most likely decide to withdraw the Sixth Fleet West of Sicily to avoid a Soviet air attack and prepare for a counterattack.<sup>17</sup> In any case, it should be stressed that regarding the tactical air support mission of maritime aviation, from the early 1950s until the mid-1960s emphasis was given to nuclear strikes than to conventional bombing.<sup>18</sup> In such a context, the establishment and maintenance of NATO naval supremacy might prove irrelevant to the actual defence of mainland Greece, the Straits, and Anatolia, should war occur. With the increased possibility of retaliatory nuclear strikes by the Sixth Fleet against the advancing Soviet-bloc forces within Greek and Turkish territory, this made NATO's strategy in the Southern Flank unattractive to the Greeks and the Turks. In fact, during the 1950s NATO and the Sixth Fleet were unable to defend Greece and Turkey. The alliance and the United States based their strategy on deterrence by punishment.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For more details see for example the country chapters on Italy, Greece and Turkey in NATO/C-M(54)100, Report on 1954 Annual Review, 26-November-1954.

<sup>17</sup> John Iatrides, 'Failed Rampart: NATO's Balkan Front', in Mary Ann Heiss and Victor Papacosma (eds.) *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intrabloc Conflicts* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2008), pp.58-74.

<sup>18</sup> Desmond Wilson, 'The US Sixth Fleet and the Conventional Defense of Europe', Professional Paper No. 160 (Arlington, Virginia: Center for Naval Analyses, September 1976), pp.1-60.

<sup>19</sup> Deterrence by punishment seeks to deter an adversary by threatening to respond by such means so as to make the costs of the adversary's actions outweigh potential benefits, while deterrence by denial seeks to persuade an adversary that he cannot achieve his aims. See David Lonsdale, 'Strategy', in David Jordan et al., *Understanding Modern Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.14-63.

**ii) Historical framework: The early Cold War in the Eastern Mediterranean, 1945-1950**

Greece and Turkey (as well as Iran) were the first points of East-West friction and antagonism after the Second World War. In essence, the first episodes occurred even before the end of the war. After German withdrawal from Greece in October 1944, the Greek communists clashed with the pro-western forces (and British paratroops) during December 1944 and January 1945, until a truce was signed in February. Furthermore, on 19 March 1945 the USSR denounced the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality of 17 December 1925, stating that the treaty did not correspond to present circumstances and should be revised. The real shock came on 7 June, when Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov demanded significant Turkish concessions in order to conclude a new Soviet-Turkish treaty: those included the return to the USSR of the former Armenian districts of Kars and Ardahan, ceded to Turkey in 1921, the establishment of Soviet bases in the Straits area, and a bilateral (and not international) agreement on revision of the Montreux Convention. Molotov also implied that if Turkey reoriented its foreign policy towards the USSR, the fulfilment of the above demands would become unnecessary.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, Turkey sought for British advice and support (bilateral relations had been uneasy until late 1944 due to Turkish refusal to declare war against the Axis), and Britain decided to intervene in Moscow. It proposed to the United States a joint approach to the Soviets, but at that time the State Department did not favour an Anglo-American demarche, for fear that this would further damage the Soviet-Turkish

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<sup>20</sup> Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East. Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp.303, 342-382.

relations. Then London acted unilaterally and indicated to Moscow that the Straits and the other issues raised by the USSR should not be regarded as a matter of exclusive Soviet and Turkish interest. For their part, the COS insisted that Soviet demands for bases on the Straits should be resisted strongly.<sup>21</sup> The Straits issue was discussed at the Potsdam Conference (17 July-2 August 1945) but the Big Three were unable to agree on the revision of the Montreux Convention. It should be noted that during 1945 the US leadership had not yet formed a coherent policy for the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East and preferred to avoid a quick and deep American involvement in (and thus commitment to) the region. Therefore, the Turks failed to stimulate US support at that stage.<sup>22</sup>

However, by the end of the Second World War, the United States had acquired long term interests in the Mediterranean. It had contributed significantly to the liberation of northern Africa and Italy, and US policy makers were becoming increasingly aware of the region's crucial place in protecting American and Western interests in the Middle East; the latter started to assume a focal position in Washington's considerations. Despite this, the Americans regarded the whole basin as a British sphere of influence (their own role being just 'a supporting one to the British') and therefore in 1945 they effectively withdrew their military and naval forces from the Mediterranean.<sup>23</sup>

US military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, and specifically Turkey, dated back to 1943. During 1943-5, the United States established a military transport

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<sup>21</sup> Mustafa Sitki Bilgin and Steven Morewood, 'Turkey's Reliance on Britain: British Political and Diplomatic Support for Turkey against Soviet Demands, 1943-47', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 40/2 (March 2004), pp.24-57.

<sup>22</sup> Ekavi Athanassopoulou, *Turkey – Anglo-American Security Interests 1945-1952: The First Enlargement of NATO* (London & Portland: Frank Cass, 1999), pp.42-43.

<sup>23</sup> Effie Pedaliu, 'Truman, Eisenhower, and the Mediterranean Cold War', *The Maghreb review*, 31/1 (2006), pp.2-20.

and radio communications station in Adana, in South-eastern Turkey. The Adana station was a first demonstration of Turkish strategic importance in the mind of US policy makers, while it also laid the groundwork for the construction of the first joint US-Turkish air base after 1950-1, at Adana (in 1958 it was renamed the İnçirlik air base).<sup>24</sup> After the end of Second World War in Europe and for approximately nine months the Americans virtually ceased their military presence in Turkey. However, continuing Soviet pressures to Iran and other developments led to a gradual reappraisal of US policy. As post-war US strategic thinking evolved, it was announced on 6 March 1946 that the body of the deceased Turkish ambassador to Washington, Mehmet Ertegün, would be returned to Istanbul on the battleship *Missouri*; this was a clear signal of US support to Turkey.<sup>25</sup> Soon afterwards, a considerable increase of American naval presence in the Mediterranean occurred, although for the time being the US policy makers decided to dispatch certain vessels in small units to cruise across the Mediterranean and show the flag, instead of forming a powerful fleet or task force.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile, contemporary British and US military planning in the aftermath of the Second World War suggested that the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East should be retained by the West. The Middle East would constitute, along with Britain, the main platform for the launch of a US-UK strategic offensive against Soviet industrial and military targets, while the Mediterranean would become the major

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Cossaboom and Gary Leiser, 'Adana Station 1943-45: Prelude to the Post-war American Military Presence in Turkey', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34/1 (January 1998), pp.73-86.

<sup>25</sup> Athanassopoulou, *Turkey*, p.49.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Millis (ed.), *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York: Viking Press, 1951), p.171; Jonathan Knight, 'American Statecraft and the 1946 Black Sea Straits Controversy', *Political Science Quarterly*, 90/3 (fall 1975), pp.451-75.

theatre of concentration and of naval operations at the start of a general war.<sup>27</sup> US-UK fears stemmed from Soviet desire to fill existing or emerging power vacuums in Southern Europe and the Near East. For example, during negotiation of the Italian peace treaty, the Americans, even more than the British, defended the Italian interests, particularly regarding Italy's territorial claims in Venezia Giulia and in Trieste. The US Secretary of State, James Byrnes, and the British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin resisted Tito's efforts to annex the whole city and its hinterland. Back in Washington, US policy makers decided to remain firm on the Trieste issue, since until the Tito-Stalin split in 1948, Yugoslavia was considered the closest ally of the USSR. The US Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, insisted that the Trieste area, along with the whole Eastern Mediterranean, should be defended, even though for the time being the US Navy could dispatch only moderate forces to the Mediterranean. In any case, Molotov appeared conciliatory at the Council of Foreign Ministers and, despite Tito's protest, accepted that Trieste should be turned into a free port under UN tutelage. In early August tension was heightened since the Yugoslavs shot down two US aircraft which had violated Yugoslavia's airspace.<sup>28</sup> It was at that juncture that in August 1946 the Soviets sent a diplomatic note to Ankara, demanding joint Soviet-Turkish control of the Straits.

During the second half of 1946, neither the Turkish nor the US policy makers feared that the Soviets might resort to military action against Turkey. What worried them was that Moscow's demand for bases in the Straits would constitute the first step towards the rise of Soviet presence and influence in the Eastern Mediterranean and the

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<sup>27</sup> Eric Grove and Geoffrey Till, 'Anglo-American Maritime Strategy in the Era of Massive Retaliation, 1945-60', in John Hattendorf and Robert Jordan (eds.), *Maritime Strategy and the Balance of Power: Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Macmillan, 1989), pp.271-303.

<sup>28</sup> Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p.123.

Near East. Due to the advent of airpower, bases in the Straits would not suffice to keep them open in case of conflict between the USSR and the United States and Britain, and therefore the Soviets might soon ask for more bases in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean (for example, in the Dodecanese islands or Tripolitania). The rise of Soviet influence and the augmentation of power projection capabilities in the area could seriously threaten British lines of communication and oil supplies, and ultimately jeopardise the strategic bombing offensive against the USSR in case of war.<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, the United States decided to adopt a firm policy and fully backed Turkey to resist Soviet pressure. State, War, and Navy Department officials argued that Soviet claims should be resisted, 'with the full realisation that if Russia did not back down ...it might lead to armed conflict'. President Truman concurred.<sup>30</sup> US naval forces proved a very valuable strategic asset and offered great flexibility to American foreign policy. Indeed, although by the end of 1945 and until mid-1946 the US Mediterranean fleet comprised of one light cruiser and two destroyers, and in August 1946 included three cruisers and four destroyers, its strength was augmented significantly in subsequent weeks. By late 1946 Task Force 125 of the Twelfth Fleet consisted of one carrier, three cruisers, and eight destroyers. Furthermore, its operational area of responsibility had expanded and included the whole Mediterranean, the Black and Red Seas, and the Persian Gulf. The above commitment of the US Navy was well publicised, or propagandised, by 'showing the flag' along the Mediterranean (for example, the carrier *Franklin D. Roosevelt* visited Piraeus in September 1946). Furthermore, Forrestal, perhaps the staunchest anti-communist figure within the

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<sup>29</sup> Idem, 'Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War: the United States, Turkey, and NATO, 1945-1952', *Journal of American History*, 71/4 (1985), pp.807-825.

<sup>30</sup> Millis (ed.), *The Forrestal Diaries*, pp.192-3.

Truman Administration, announced on 1 October 1946 that the US naval forces would be maintained permanently in duty in the Mediterranean in support of American interests and policies in the area.<sup>31</sup>

As the Greek Civil War had broken out between the Communist Party and the pro-western forces, and as the financial situation in Britain continued to deteriorate, Whitehall decided that the British could no longer support economically and militarily Greece and Turkey.<sup>32</sup> On 21 February, London informed Washington that by 31 March assistance to the Greeks and the Turks would be terminated, and British troops would be withdrawn from Greece; hopefully, the United States would assume the responsibility to continue the provision of aid to Athens and Ankara and contain Soviet influence in Eastern Mediterranean. US officials, particularly of the State Department (including the Under Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, and the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, William Clayton) as well as Forrestal, were ready and eager to undertake action. A communist victory in Greece might have broader political and psychological repercussions, since it would probably boost the Italian and French Communist parties. Of course, additional concerns included the fear that the USSR might gain a foothold in the Mediterranean and manage to threaten the flow of raw materials (such as Middle Eastern oil), critical for West European economic recovery.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p.211; Allard, 'An Era of Transition'; Knight, 'American Statecraft', pp.451-75.

<sup>32</sup> For the Greek Civil War, some indicative works are: David Close, *The Origins of the Greek Civil War* (London and New York: Longman, 1995); Amikam Nachmani, 'Civil War and Foreign Intervention in Greece, 1946-49', *Journal of Contemporary History* 25/4 (1984), pp.489-522; Lawrence Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece, 1943-1949* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); John Iatrides, 'Revolution or Self-Defence? Communist Goals, Strategy and Tactics in the Greek Civil War', *Journal of the Cold War Studies* 7/3 (2005), pp.3-33; Thanasis Sfikas, *The British Labour government and the Greek Civil War 1945-1949: the imperialism of 'non-intervention'* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1994).

<sup>33</sup> Leffler, *A Preponderance*, pp.142-3.

In any case, the Greek problem set in motion a whole process, since Washington recognised that the situation in Greece constituted just part of a much larger problem. Western and Southern Europe was exhausted and disheartened and the Near East in turbulence. It was understood that it was imperative to present a clear message that the United States would make a strong commitment to the preservation of 'freedom'.<sup>34</sup> The United States should assume, to the extent necessary, Britain's responsibilities and demonstrate their determination to resist communist drive in Greece.<sup>35</sup> In fact, in early 1947 Greece presented a good opportunity for the Truman administration to implement its, still evolving, strategy of 'containment'. Therefore, on 12 March 1947 President Truman requested from Congress \$400 million for aid to Greece and Turkey. This initiative was widely known as the Truman Doctrine. The goal was the total defeat of the Greek communists and to this aim Washington delivered military and economic assistance of approximately \$1 billion and dispatched a military mission (JUSMAGG) with extensive power, but also nearly assumed full control of the Greek state machinery and armed forces.<sup>36</sup> In addition, the US policy makers, civilian and military, favoured the extension of aid to Turkey. First, Greece and Turkey formed one geostrategic unit. Second, Turkey possessed a large (though ineffective) army which, if reinforced and modernised, might play a significant role in slowing down a Soviet advance in the Middle East, should a general war erupt.<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, from the spring of 1947 onwards Turkish officials were advocating the formation of an Eastern Mediterranean defence pact composed by

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<sup>34</sup> Kuniholm, *The Origins*, pp.412-3.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Satterthwaite, 'The Truman Doctrine: Turkey', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 401 (May 1972), pp.74-84.

<sup>36</sup> John Iatrides and Nicholas Rizopoulos, 'The International Dimension of the Greek Civil War', *World Policy Journal* 17/1 (spring 2000), pp.87-103.

<sup>37</sup> Leffler, 'Strategy, Diplomacy', pp.807-825.



Turkey, Egypt and Greece and backed by the West; this pact could be associated closely with another, Western Mediterranean, pact formed by Spain, Italy and France. By August, Ankara was favouring the US and British full inclusion into such a pact. Therefore, it was obvious that Turkey sought to get fully tied with the West. Contrary to the Second World War, neutrality could not be a viable option.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, Turkey endeavoured to get additional US economic aid, both from the Marshal Plan and from private investors. Progressively, Ankara tried to transfer an increasing portion of the aid from the military field to the purely economic, so as to finance Turkish development programmes. Turkey's constant demands for additional US financial (as well as military) assistance became a permanent factor in the following years, not only in the country's foreign policy, but also in the domestic scene (it should be remembered that the first multiparty general elections were held in July 1946).<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the issue of which party could best achieve increased US aid soon became a point of domestic debate, particularly between the Republican and the Democratic parties. Generally, the same applied to Greece as well.

As regards post-war Italy, both the civilian and military leadership recognised that the country should not enter a major conflict without the help of powerful allies (that is Britain and especially the United States), that it should never try to place emphasis on military force as the key element of Italian foreign policy, and that reconstruction of Italian armed forces could only occur if Washington (and London) provided the necessary hardware. By early 1947 the Americans had to replace the British as the main supporter of the Italian armed forces, and, despite the conclusion of the Italian Peace Treaty (which provided for a degree of demilitarisation), in

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<sup>38</sup> Gareth Winrow, *Dialogue with the Mediterranean: the role of NATO's Mediterranean initiative* (New York: Garland, 2000), p.52.

<sup>39</sup> Athanassopoulou, *Turkey*, pp.69-73.

December 1947 they decided to provide secretly a large amount of equipment. By then, the Italian policy makers had concluded that a close relationship with the United States would consolidate stability in the domestic scene at a time when communist influence was significant, and bolster the country's position against Yugoslavia. At the same time, UK-Italian relations were somewhat problematic.<sup>40</sup> Subsequently, in 1948 and early 1949 the Foreign Office and the COS believed that Italy should not be included in either the Brussels or the Atlantic Pact: Italy's accession to the western defence organizations might have a positive effect on the stabilization of the internal situation in the country (particularly on bolstering the position of Alcide De Gasperi, the Italian centre-right, pro-Western prime minister); but militarily, any Italian association with the western defence pacts was unsound. On this point the British were at odds with the Americans.<sup>41</sup>

In the second half of 1948 discussions between the United States, Canada, and the Brussels Pact countries (Britain, France, Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) broadened and the establishment of a North Atlantic security system was considered.<sup>42</sup> Then the issue of Italian inclusion became a matter of debate and controversy. Geographically Italy lies outside the Atlantic area, while it was common view that militarily it would become a liability rather than an asset, because it could contribute very little and was subject to military limitations imposed by the Italian peace treaty. However, Italy's strategic position was very significant to the West, and, equally important, its alignment with the Western powers should be affirmed and

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<sup>40</sup> Leopoldo Nuti, 'Continuity and Change in Italian Defence Policy (1945-1995)', in Michel Dumoulin (ed.), *La Communauté Européenne De Défense, Leçons Pour Demain?* (Bruxelles, etc.: P.I.E. - P. Lang, 2000), pp.375-400.

<sup>41</sup> TNA/DEFE/4/19, COS(49) 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 17-January-1949.

<sup>42</sup> For those talks, see for example the recent work of Lawrence Kaplan, *NATO 1948: The Birth of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Lanham, etc.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), especially pp.105-137.

cemented. At that point the threat of internal subversion in Italy by the Italian Communist party (PCI), which was one of the largest in Western Europe, appeared real.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, and influential US diplomats viewed that it would be politically dangerous to exclude Italy from the main Western security pact. The country did not have any formal connection with the United States, as had Greece and Turkey after the proclamation and implementation of the Truman Doctrine, and Rome's isolation might encourage Soviet penetration.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the Americans decided to insist on Italian inclusion to NATO and Italy became a founding member of the alliance on 4 April 1949.

Since the focus of the talks between the Brussels Pact countries and the Americans and Canadians was on the Northern Atlantic area, the Eastern Mediterranean (and therefore Greece as well as Turkey) was not intended to be included. Although Greece was too weak to demand its admission to NATO and was preoccupied with the final defeat of the communist insurgents, the Turkish government explicitly expressed its interest. The Truman Doctrine did not constitute an alliance, and the duration of US commitment and economic aid remained uncertain. What Ankara (and Athens) wished was a formal US security commitment (followed by a long-term programme of military and economic aid). Last but not least, the Turks in particular were eager to participate in any Western defence scheme, and ultimately in NATO, to consolidate their position in the West, be recognised as integral part of Europe, and demonstrate their willingness to commit themselves to the defence of the

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<sup>43</sup> Timothy Smith, 'The Fear of Subversion: The United States and the Inclusion of Italy in the North Atlantic Treaty', *Diplomatic History* 7/2 (April 1983), pp.139-155.

<sup>44</sup> Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: Norton, 1969), p.279; Sir Nicholas Henderson, *The birth of NATO* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1982), p.56.

West – Turkey’s reputation as a trustworthy ally had been undermined due to its neutrality during the Second World War.<sup>45</sup>

However, in the late 1940s, Washington, and particularly the European allies, considered Greece and Turkey, and the Eastern Mediterranean as a whole, too remote from the important centres of power in Europe. NATO was supposed to cover those centres, and an expansion to the South-east would dilute the already limited defence capabilities of the West.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the Americans rebuffed Turkish attempts to link directly or indirectly NATO with the Anglo-French-Turkish treaty of 1939, but tried to reassure the Turks that the absence of a formal US commitment to Turkey did not mean a decrease in US support for the latter.<sup>47</sup>

Meanwhile, in 1947-49 discussions were being held between the US and the British policy makers on how to coordinate more effectively their policies in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The British Commanders-in-Chief Middle East met periodically with US Admiral Conolly, Commander-in-Chief Naval Forces Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (CINCNELM).<sup>48</sup> During the same period, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) authorized CINCNELM to formulate and coordinate with the British Naval C-in-C Mediterranean combined plans for allied operations in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Those plans should also include details of proposed command structures. It is interesting that no approach to other Western

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<sup>45</sup> Paul Kubicek, ‘Turkey’s Inclusion in the Atlantic Community: Looking Back, Looking Forward’, *Turkish Studies* 9/1 (March 2008), pp.21-35; Ekavi Athanassopoulou, ‘Western Defence Developments and Turkey’s Search for Security in 1948’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 32/2 (April 1996), pp.77-108.

<sup>46</sup> Lawrence Kaplan and Robert Clawson, ‘NATO and the Mediterranean Powers in Historical Perspective’, in Lawrence S Kaplan, Robert Clawson, Raimondo Luraghi et al., *NATO and the Mediterranean* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1985), pp.3-17.

<sup>47</sup> Barin Kayaoğlu, ‘Strategic imperatives, Democratic rhetoric: The United States and Turkey, 1945-52’, *Cold War History*, 9/3 (August 2009), pp.321-45.

<sup>48</sup> TNA/DEFE/4/19, COS(49)11<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 21-January-1949.

nations for the initiation of joint planning with the Americans (and the British) would be made.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, Anglo-American military cooperation and coordination from the late 1940s to the early 1950s proved a thorny issue. The Americans and the British held widely divergent views on the primary aim and role of sea power. The two navies had faced quite different experiences during the Second World War, and in the post war period possessed rather asymmetric resources and capabilities. Therefore, the US Navy emphasized on the retention of a strong carrier force to project offensive power, while the British favoured a more defensive role and focused on the protection of the sea lines of communication (SLOC).<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, in 1947 the US military and civilian planners, aware of the strategic value of the Middle East (and thus of the Eastern Mediterranean), had been ready to commit considerable forces for the defence of the area. However by 1949 the JCS had reversed course and made plain both to the British and to the State Department that irrespective of the strategic importance of the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean, in the event of a Third World War the ‘big job... first, last, and always... was to win the battle in Europe’. Deeply troubled by the lack of sufficient forces in peacetime and worried about a possible overextension of US military commitments, the JCS continued to oppose the assumption of more responsibilities beyond Europe.<sup>51</sup> This US-UK divergence of views continued in the early 1950s, and as we will analyse later on played a significant role in future developments. Significantly, the US decision to press for Greek and Turkish membership to NATO in

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<sup>49</sup> TNA/DEFE/4/19, J.P.(49)5 (Final), 25-January-1949.

<sup>50</sup> Grove and Till, ‘Anglo-American Maritime Strategy’, pp.271-303.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Cohen, ‘From “Cold” to “Hot” War: Allied Strategic and Military Interests in the Middle East after the Second World War’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 43/5 (September 2007), pp.725-48.

1951, was not irrelevant to the above arguments. A primary reason for their admission was that both countries kept numerous, though antiquated, forces under arms and were willing to contribute to NATO's defence effort. It was at that point that the outbreak of the Korean War gave a decisive impetus to the notion of Greek-Turkish accession to NATO.

The study proceeds on a chronological basis and is divided into six chapters. Chapter one deals with the decision-making and the negotiations which led to Greek and Turkish admission to NATO during 1951 and early 1952, including the US decision to press its allies for the adherence of Greece and Turkey to the alliance, Britain's effort to link those two countries with the defence of the Middle East, as well as the views and policies of other member states, particularly France and Italy. Chapter two analyses the command reorganization in the Southern Flank area after the final placement of Greek and Turkish land and air forces under Commander-in-Chief Southern Europe (CINCSOUTH) and the final settlement of the US-UK dispute over command arrangements, particularly on sea. This chapter also discusses the initiation of tripartite Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav cooperation, the failure to link the defence of the Middle East with that of the Southern Flank, as well as NATO's actual inability to defend the southern region, particularly the Balkan frontier. Chapter three deals with the conclusion of the Balkan Alliance during 1953-4, the political-diplomatic and military posture of each Southern Flank country, and also gives a thorough account of NATO strategy in the Southern Flank during the era of 'New Look'.

Chapter four accounts for the disintegration of the south-eastern frontier of NATO in 1955-6 due to the actual decay of the Balkan Alliance and, particularly, the rapid deterioration of Greek-Turkish and UK-Greek relations owing to the eruption of

the Cyprus dispute; this proved to be the first intra-NATO dispute, and the alliance proved unable to deal with it. An appraisal of the Southern Flank's defence capabilities in 1955-6 is also given. Last but not least, the chapter discusses developments in the Middle East affecting the Southern Flank's position, notably the conclusion of the Baghdad pact. Chapter five deals with the continuing Greek-Turkish crisis and NATO's inability to intervene effectively to break the Cyprus imbroglio, goes through developments in the Balkans and particularly the Middle East which directly affected the politics and defence position of the Southern Flank, and analyses the military-economic aspect of the Southern Flank's defence. The last chapter, chapter six, examines the events of late 1957 to late 1959, and attempts to explain how the Southern Flank escaped from the brink of dissolution in late 1958 and was temporarily revived, due to the short-lived settlement of the Cyprus question in early 1959 and the Greek-Turkish rapprochement. Moreover, chapter six analyses NATO's response (or non-response) to regional pressures in the Balkans and the Middle East, the incomplete application of the new NATO strategy (as envisaged in M.C.70 document) on the Southern Flank due to economic/financial impediments, and the issue of the placement of nuclear weapons on the Southern Flank countries.

## **1. THE ROAD TO NATO'S FIRST ENLARGEMENT**

### **From the Association of Greece and Turkey to NATO to their Full Admission, January 1951 – February 1952**

The outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June 1950 set off a US-UK debate regarding the defence of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, while Greece sought, and Turkey demanded, to get a direct US guarantee, preferably through their admission to NATO. However, in the aftermath of the shock of Communist aggression against South Korea, the West was mainly preoccupied with the quick organization of the defence of Western Europe; both the United States and Britain estimated that Greece and Turkey were too far from Western Europe, and that the West could not extend its commitments (and limited resources) to the south-east.

Meanwhile, the British were preoccupied with their effort to retain their predominance in the Middle East and to maintain some prestige as a leading western power, and wished to incorporate the Greek and particularly the Turkish forces in a British-led Middle East Command (MEC). Moreover, the issue of Greek and Turkish inclusion into NATO or another western defence pact was further complicated, because it was linked with US-UK disputes over command arrangements in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. At the same time, the hesitation of several European countries to accept NATO's enlargement created additional difficulties.

However, the Turkish government under Prime Minister Adnan Menderes followed a very active policy and kept pressing the major western powers for



Turkey's adherence to NATO. After some consideration, key figures of the US political and military leadership (not least officers holding NATO posts) emerged in early 1951 as strong advocates of Greek and Turkish inclusion into NATO. Indeed, other alternatives, including the establishment of a Middle East or Mediterranean pact did not seem viable. Therefore, by May 1951, the Truman Administration was officially endorsing NATO's enlargement towards the south-east, and during summer 1951 Washington sponsored Turkey's and Greece's admission to NATO. Thus, the door opened for the adherence of Greece and Turkey to the alliance. Still, the issue of the suitable command setup to include the Greek and Turkish forces proved a thorny one, as every interested party sought to satisfy its national political goals – which often stemmed from psychological or prestige considerations. In this context, military strategy was often subordinated to the national political needs of the main actors.

***i) Turkey's appeal for admission to NATO and the association of Greece and Turkey with NATO military planning, May 1950-early 1951***

The outbreak of the Korean War set off a process of rearrangement and put an end to cordial Anglo-American cooperation in the Middle East. British officials argued during bilateral talks in Washington in late July 1950 that Britain should be relieved of the 'primary responsibility' for the military defence of the Middle East. The British sought a considerable US military contribution, a request which was turned down by the Americans. In addition, divergence of opinion arose regarding military planning to defend the region. The US planners disagreed with the British plan of defending only the "Inner Ring" because this would constitute a defence of Egypt, not the Middle East, and could not become a basis of joint US-UK planning. Instead they

recommended the implementation of the Outer Ring strategy which would give Turkey (and Iran), rather than Egypt, the highest priority in allied military planning (thus reflecting the fact that the Americans had been reinforcing the Turkish armed forces and improving facilities in Turkey); the JCS expected Turkey to play by far the most important role, contributing the bulk of the allied ground forces. However, Washington had been still unwilling to extend its military commitments in the region; although the recently approved US strategy (based on the NSC-68 document) and the Korean War provided for a massive US military build-up, the American military perspectives and attitudes towards the Middle East were scarcely changed in early 1950s.<sup>52</sup>

In the meantime, Turkey had taken the initiative and approached the United States and Britain in the hope of joining NATO. Turkey aimed either at its inclusion into NATO or at obtaining some form of direct American security guarantee in addition to the guarantee afforded by the Anglo-French-Turkish Treaty of 1939. However, the United States and Britain rejected at the end of May 1950 a new, pressing Turkish appeal for admission into NATO; Greece, following Ankara, had applied as well. The Americans were not prepared to give Greece and Turkey any direct US guarantee, while the British wanted to associate Turkey with their Middle East defence plans.<sup>53</sup> In fact, until 1950, concerning Turkey's security, the goals of the United States and Turkey were not identical. Washington's priority was to strengthen Turkey's resistance in case of Soviet attack and to use military assistance as a lever to

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<sup>52</sup> Richie Ovendale, *Britain, the United States and the transfer of power in the Middle East, 1945-1962* (London & New York: Leicester University Press, 1996), pp.32-34; Toru Onozawa, 'Formation of American Regional Policy for the Middle, 1950-1952: The Middle East Command Concept and Its Legacy', *Diplomatic History* 29/1 (January 2005), pp.117-48.

<sup>53</sup> Behçet Yesilbursa, 'Turkey's Participation in the Middle East Command and its Admission to NATO, 1950-52', *Middle Eastern Studies* 35/4 (October 1999), pp.70-102.

bring Turkish military planning into line with US objectives, while Ankara sought to obtain direct guarantee of US assistance as a deterrent against a Soviet attack.<sup>54</sup>

The outbreak of the Korean War worked as a catalyst: Both Turkey and Greece (the latter was still not actively pressing for admission due to its political-diplomatic weakness, but strongly desired to join NATO) sent troops to Korea in the hope of strengthening their case for admission to NATO. Concurrently, the Turks began again to press the United States and Britain for admission to NATO or at least for some kind of formal security guarantee. State Department officials could find little evidence that the Soviet Union was threatening Turkey and even Turkish officials acknowledged that to some extent it was due to domestic politics that they were pressing to join NATO. Nevertheless, the Americans knew that from a geopolitical perspective the Turks had always the option of neutralism, while Turkey and Greece were indispensable for Western security interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Moreover, both the Americans and the British acknowledged that for political and geostrategic reasons, if Turkey was accepted into NATO, Greece would have to be accepted too.<sup>55</sup>

The primary reasons for Turkey's strong request for admission were its desire to participate in the principal defence organisation of the West, with the hope of obtaining additional arms, and the commitment of allied support in the event of war, and the belief that membership in NATO would deter Soviet aggression. Although Greece was not pressing the matter at present, preferring to wait and see the reaction to the Turkish request, the Greek interest in the pact was based upon the same

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<sup>54</sup> Athanassopoulou, 'Western Defence Developments', pp.77-108; Leffler, 'Strategy, Diplomacy', pp.807-825.

<sup>55</sup> Yeşilbursa, 'Turkey's Participation', pp. 70-102; Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance*, pp.419-20; Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, *Greece and the Cold War: Frontline State, 1952-1967* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp.11-13.

considerations. The Americans (and the other officials of the other major NATO powers) were aware of those motives.<sup>56</sup> Regarding Greece, various allied diplomatic circles hinted to Greek officials that Athens' policy quietly to link its interest in joining NATO with the Turkish claim without proceeding with demarches, demands and complaints was wise, since it did not face the consequences of a diplomatic defeat, while it could fully benefit from the military talks which were taking place regarding Eastern Mediterranean defence.<sup>57</sup>

The US position concerning the issue of the admission of Greece and Turkey into NATO evolved from July 1950 to spring 1951, when Washington finally opted for the full membership of the two states. It seems that the US diplomatic representatives in Athens and Ankara were from the beginning positive to the idea of adherence to, or at least association with, NATO. First, they appreciated the fighting capabilities of the two nations – which were considered to be better than that of many larger nations with whom the US were allied in NATO – and especially their forces in being, which at least in short term would be distinct military assets. Second, they believed that Washington had undertaken since the 1947 proclamation of the Truman Doctrine a deep moral commitment to defend Greece and Turkey from communist aggression. Third, if Greece and Turkey were excluded, it would probably bolster neutralist and defeatist sentiments in those countries; on the contrary, their inclusion in (or association with) NATO would facilitate Greek-Turkish military understanding.<sup>58</sup>

One of the first considerations of the State Department was the fear that if, as members of NATO, Greece and Turkey realised the fact that the NATO powers, with

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<sup>56</sup> *FRUS*, 1950, III[1], pp.258-9; also Athanassopoulou, *Turkey*, p.150

<sup>57</sup> Ioannis Politis Archive (hereafter:IPA), File 228/57, Xanthopoulos-Palamas to Ioannis Politis, Paris 29-September-1950, and Rafail to Greek delegation in New York, No E.1046, Paris 11-October-1950.

<sup>58</sup> *FRUS*, 1950, III[1], pp.161-2, 240-1.

their existing – limited – capabilities, could not commit substantial forces to the defence of Greece and Turkey in the event of an external aggression, their admission would then prove more harmful than beneficial. Another worry was, in case of Greek and Turkish admission to NATO, what measures could be taken to assure Iran for continuing US interest for its independence and integrity.<sup>59</sup> The State Department believed that the problem was more political-diplomatic than military, although it did not underestimate the military and strategic aspects. Then, on 31 August 1950 the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, asked from the Defense Secretary, Lewis Johnson, and the JCS, to consider the problem of Turkish and Greek connection to western defence planning and express their views as soon as possible.<sup>60</sup>

The US diplomacy estimated that the decision concerning the admission of Greece and Turkey into NATO involved various considerations. For instance, to what extent they would add military strength to NATO, how far their inclusion would provoke or deter the USSR, the organisational and planning problems which would arise due to the pact's enlargement, and the extent to which the USA and the other NATO powers would be able to assist effectively Greece and Turkey in the event of war.<sup>61</sup> At this early stage, other alternatives to the adherence of Greece and Turkey to NATO were considered. One of these was the establishment of a new security pact initially consisting of Greece, Turkey and Iran, under which the United States, Britain and France might either enter into reciprocal commitments (on the NATO model) or give a non-reciprocal commitment assuring the above countries that no aggression against them would be tolerated and that any possible support would be provided;

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, pp.219-20.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, pp.260-1.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p.259.

however, the problem what Western military aid – particularly air support – could be promised them in the event of attack remained unsolved.

Another alternative was that Greece and Turkey could attend the meetings of a Mediterranean section of NATO on a consultative basis rather than as full-fledged members. Such an arrangement would obviously be only a delaying device, since Greece and Turkey would not remain satisfied for long with anything less than direct and full participation in NATO. Alternatively, another option was to seek persuading Ankara not to join the Atlantic pact but to assure it that the United States would be prepared to make a clear, strongly-worded non-reciprocal declaration that it would not tolerate any aggression against Turkey; moreover, that US military aid in the maximum amount possible would be granted to Turkey. Such an arrangement with Turkey would probably require a similar one with Greece and Iran. Britain and France had been committed, since 1939, to aid Turkey in the event of invasion and therefore they might consider joining with the United States in giving similar assurances to Greece and Iran.<sup>62</sup>

The US proposals were discussed by the representatives of the United States, Britain and France (these countries constituted the Standing Group of NATO – the permanent steering body of the alliance)<sup>63</sup> in Washington in late August-early September 1950. It was agreed that the problem posed by the Turkish demand for admission into NATO should be further discussed and that the Standing Group powers should seek to reach an agreement among them prior to consideration of the Turkish demand in the North Atlantic Council. Significantly, it was also believed that the three

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, pp.259-60; also Athanassopoulou, *Turkey*, p.176.

<sup>63</sup> For details on the Standing Group and the Military Committee of NATO, see Douglas Bland, *The Military Committee of the North Atlantic Alliance: A Study of Structure and Strategy* (New York: Praeger, 1991).

powers should also consider the broader question of Near Eastern security, of which the Turkish (and Greek) issue had been but one aspect.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, as early as mid-1950, the issue of the Greek and Turkish admission became interconnected with the whole allied defence planning in the Near East.

For its part, the Defence Department recommended the granting of associate status to Turkey and Greece so that both countries could participate without delay in coordinating planning. However, it indicated that the full admission of Greece and Turkey to NATO would negatively affect the latter's military progress then occurring. Their admission would be desirable only insofar as it would facilitate coordinated military planning for the NATO and Eastern Mediterranean area. Therefore, the Defense Department considered that maximum benefit would be obtained and, concurrently, the disadvantages minimized by according Greece and Turkey a special status in NATO short of membership; this should provide for the collaboration of Greece and Turkey in appropriate military bodies in NATO, so that a coordinated defence of Western Europe, the Mediterranean and, to a lesser degree, the Middle East might be effected.

This associate arrangement would not involve any particular organisational and administrative difficulties. Once the defence of the member states of NATO was assured, raising the question of full membership for Greece and Turkey in the alliance should be considered. Iran, however, should not be given either consultative or associate member status in NATO. Moreover, the Defence Department would not object, from the military point of view, to the United States, the UK and France giving a joint informal assurance to Turkey as well as Greece and Iran. it nevertheless

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<sup>64</sup> *FRUS*, 1950, III[2], pp.1141-2,1180.

opposed the establishment of a new Middle East defence pact which might involve further formal commitments of military assistance to Greece and Turkey (and also Iran). In any case, the fear that association with NATO military planning would disclose to Greece and Turkey the limited defence capabilities of the alliance, therefore seriously affecting Greek and Turkish morale, was persistent.<sup>65</sup>

Therefore, in early autumn 1950 the US and NATO authorities favoured some kind of association, though not full adherence, of the two countries with appropriate phases of NATO military planning concerning the defence of the Mediterranean area; it was expected that this would be both acceptable and desirable from the Greek and Turkish point of view. As early as October 1950 the Standing Group was authorized to examine the issue of this association, notify Greek and Turkish officials of any arrangements related to military planning, and report its action to the Military Committee.<sup>66</sup>

At the same time, in autumn 1950 and winter 1950/51 an extended reorganization of the temporary military structure of NATO was taking place; so, any discussion and proposal concerning the association of Greece and Turkey with NATO should go ahead within the framework of the above changes and the establishment of NATO's command organizations and operational planning. At this point it should be pointed out that the issue of the admission of Greece, and, especially, Turkey into the alliance would become highly dependent on and closely interlocked with regional

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<sup>65</sup> *FRUS*, 1950, III [p.1], pp.278-82, 284.

<sup>66</sup> NATO Archives, Brussels, (hereafter: NATO/), S.G.80, Note on Association of the Turkish and Greek Governments with the Military Planning of NATO, 9-October-1950; NATO/M.C.22/1, 16-October-1950.



command issues, such as the allied naval Mediterranean Command and the allied Middle East Command.<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, the Standing Group, despite the short time available, gave urgent consideration to the problem of Greek and Turkish association to NATO's military planning; on the first occasion, it proposed that contact should be established with the Greek and Turkish military authorities through their military attachés in Washington.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the NATO bodies decided to invite the Turkish and Greek governments to send a military representative to discuss with the Standing Group the issue of associating – where appropriate – Turkey and Greece in North Atlantic defence planning in the Mediterranean; of special importance was the definition of the areas wherein participation and planning would be mutually advantageous to NATO and Greece and Turkey, and of the machinery through which such planning could be achieved.<sup>69</sup>

In fact the British believed that regardless of what the NATO machinery was doing about the Turkish and Greek association, it was not particularly in the UK interest that any progress should be made until the US and British Chiefs of Staff had decided on a common line, and this in turn was dependant on the outcome of their discussion about command and planning responsibilities in the Middle East generally. However, the British could not obviously demonstrate their real motives, and had to

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<sup>67</sup> NATO/S.G 78<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 26-July-1951; TNA/FO/371/90030/WU11923/3G, Ministry of Defence to British Joint Services Mission (B.J.S.M.) in Washington, COS(W)887, 17-October-1950.

<sup>68</sup> NATO/S.G.80/1, Report on Association of the Turkish and Greek Governments with the Military Planning of NATO, 20-October-1950.

<sup>69</sup> NATO/M.C.27, Report on Reorganisation of the NATO Military Structure, 23-October-1950.

make it appear that they were prepared to hasten the consideration of the Turkish and Greek association through the NATO machinery.<sup>70</sup>

In November 1950, the Standing Group met separately with the Turkish and Greek representatives. It was decided that the Turkish and Greek military authorities would require liaison both with the Standing Group and the NATO Mediterranean Command, when the latter would be established. The Standing Group also recommended that the Greek and Turkish governments should establish an adequate system of security, before any matters of a classified nature could be discussed. As for the areas wherein NATO, Greece and Turkey would associate themselves in defence planning, the Standing Group stressed that although NATO planning had so far only included the Western Mediterranean whereas Greece and Turkey were interested in the Eastern Mediterranean, it might be convenient to extend the NATO area to cover the whole sea with the establishment of a Mediterranean Command. As regarded the aspects of strategic importance deriving from this association, emphasis was given to the denial of Greek and Turkish territory to enemy forces, denying the passage of enemy naval units through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, utilising the Greek and Turkish naval and air bases and maritime forces (especially to facilitate the protection of the sea lines of communication in the Eastern Mediterranean), and establishing air warning systems linked with other warning systems in the defence of the area. However, it was also emphasized that 'as long as the resources of the North Atlantic Treaty countries are stretched to the limit to provide their own defence, it is undesirable that we should become involved in detailed discussion in the denial of Turkey and Greece to enemy forces or in discussions involving the defence of the

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<sup>70</sup> TNA/FO/371/90030/WU11923/3G, 20-October-1950.

Middle East. It is suggested that these home territories should remain the responsibility of the national authorities'.<sup>71</sup>

The NATO authorities proceeded in early 1951 with a security survey in Greece and Turkey, whose object was to obtain an accurate assessment of the security organisation and standards of Greece and Turkey, namely the whole national security machinery; this survey included security procedures in any government departments or ministries likely to handle NATO material. Such security checks in Turkey and Greece seemed indispensable, because preliminary surveys undertaken by the British had demonstrated serious deficiencies in the security machinery of the two countries, especially that of Greece.<sup>72</sup> The report by the Security Coordination Committee on the security survey in Greece and Turkey was submitted to the Standing Group in mid-February 1951.<sup>73</sup>

***ii) Washington's decision in favour of Greek and Turkish full accession and the role of the British, January 1951-July 1951***

Meanwhile, the Turks continued to press for full admission to NATO or at least for some kind of formal US guarantee, while the whole issue of the military planning and the command structure in the Mediterranean and the Middle East became a top priority for Britain and the United States. Turkey in particular constituted the linchpin between Europe and the Middle East, two areas that US officials began to consider as

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<sup>71</sup> NATO/S.G.80/2, Report on Association of the Turkish and Greek Governments with the Military Planning of NATO 29-November-1950.

<sup>72</sup> NATO/S.G.7/30(Final), Report Security Surveys in Greece and Turkey, 9-January-1951.

<sup>73</sup> NATO/S.G.7/35(Final), Report Security Surveys in Greece and Turkey, 13-February-1951.

interdependent. Since the importance of Middle Eastern oil was constantly mounting for NATO nations in peacetime as well as in case of war, Turkish troops and airfields would help tie up large numbers of Soviet troops, prevent the Soviets from seizing the Persian Gulf and the British base at Suez and help the Allies launch strategic air attacks on Soviet petroleum resources and industry. Moreover, Turkish cooperation and assistance would be necessary to close the Straits to Soviet submarines, to protect NATO's lines of communications in the Eastern Mediterranean and destroy Soviet shipping in the Black Sea.<sup>74</sup>

Regarding the southern region of NATO, during this period the plans of Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General Dwight Eisenhower in case of war in Europe provided for the application of air and sea power from the two flanks (northern and southern) of the European theatre against Soviet ground forces in the center. The southern region (namely, at this stage, Italy) could be used to attack Soviet oil facilities in Romania and the Caucasus and to defend the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East or, at least, to force the Soviets to divert considerable resources to this front and lessen the pressure in the centre.<sup>75</sup>

By the end of 1950 and into early 1951, the State Department moved towards a more active policy in the Middle East. In early 1951, officials, in particular those of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) headed by the Assistant Secretary of State, George McGhee, adopted a more coherent regional view concerning the Middle East: the country-by-country approach to the problems 'had repeatedly proved inadequate as a basis for the expression of our [US] policies'. They also believed that the British could

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<sup>74</sup> Leffler, *A Preponderance*, p. 419; idem, 'Strategy, Diplomacy', pp.807-25.

<sup>75</sup> Leffler, *A Preponderance*, p.419; Bruce Kuniholm, 'The Evolving Strategic Significance of Turkey's Relationship with NATO', in Gustav Schmidt (ed.), *A History of NATO: The First Fifty Years* (London: Palgrave, 2001), vol.3, pp.339-57.

no longer protect the Middle East by their own means and that there was a need for active Anglo-American cooperation in the development and implementation of plans in the region. In addition, they were eager to bolster the morale and defence capabilities of the indigenous peoples to avoid their turning into neutrality. According to the National Security Council (NSC), the region was 'vital' to US interests; nevertheless, until that point the US actions had not reflected the above justification.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, although the United States was doing so much about Greece and Turkey, it had not yet incorporated those two countries in a coherent view regarding the defence of Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>77</sup> These policy makers also considered linking Turkey, which McGhee reasoned as 'the keystone of Near Eastern Defence', with the Arab world, while the Greek-Turkish barrier ought to provide the basis upon which not only 'a defence-in-depth' but also 'a stability-in depth' should be established. Acheson adopted those views to a considerable extent.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, by February 1951 the State Department was moving towards 'bringing even closer the relationship between Greece and Turkey and the North Atlantic defence'.<sup>79</sup>

However, although McGhee stressed only the need for a 'regional effort' under US-UK sponsorship and recognized that the UK and the Commonwealth should remain primarily responsible for the defence of the Middle East, the JCS were unwilling to make the slightest commitment of US forces to the defence of the region. They considered linking the defence of Greece and Turkey to Western Europe (rather than the Middle East) and, when the time was ripe, perhaps bringing them into

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<sup>76</sup> *FRUS*, 1951, V, pp.2, 4-6.

<sup>77</sup> Kuniholm 'The Evolving', pp. 339-57; Leffler, 'Strategy, Diplomacy', pp.807-25; Athanassopoulou, *Turkey*, pp.193-195,197; Onozawa 'Formation', pp.117-48.

<sup>78</sup> *FRUS*, 1951, V, pp.23, 26-27.

<sup>79</sup> TNA/FO/371/95284/RK1073/37G, Washington to FO No.11945/5/51, 23-February-1951.

NATO<sup>80</sup>. By doing so, some kind of link would be established between NATO and the Middle East (something that might also satisfy the British efforts for the establishment of a Middle East Command), while the US commitment would remain limited<sup>81</sup>. Furthermore, both the military and the State Department officials pointed out that they ‘looked at Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey not as an area into which we should put forces, but as an area that we can find forces’.<sup>82</sup> This would remain a basic concept of the Southern Flank throughout the 1950s.

The idea of establishing a MEC re-emerged early in 1951, when Anglo-American military leaders devised a British Supreme Allied Commander of Middle East (SACME) in an attempt to assuage British dissatisfaction with the probable nomination of a US Admiral to the newly established post of Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT). The MEC project had serious politico-military implications because NATO had been concurrently establishing a Southern Command under SACEUR, whose jurisdiction might well include the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>83</sup>

During January and February 1951, many important US officials such as George McGhee and other State Department experts, Admiral Carney (the new CINCNELM and Commander of the US Sixth Fleet) and the Secretary of Air Force Thomas Finletter visited Turkey and held conversations with the Turkish leadership; moreover, a conference of the US Middle East Ambassadors took place in Istanbul on 14-21 January of 1951. The British Commander-in-Chief Middle East Land Forces (CINCMELF), Sir Brian Robertson, in an effort to balance the mounting US influence,

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<sup>80</sup> *FRUS*, 1951, V, pp.31-33, 52, 54-5.

<sup>81</sup> Yeşilbursa, ‘Turkey’s Participation’, p.70-102.

<sup>82</sup> *FRUS*, 1951, V, p.36.

<sup>83</sup> Onozawa, ‘Formation’, pp.117-48.

also visited Turkey and had discussions regarding the prospects of British-Turkish military coordination in the Middle East.<sup>84</sup>

At that time, since the association with NATO did not seem to make any significant progress, the Turks wished that joint military planning should be embarked upon the prompt implementation of the British-Turkish alliance of 1939. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), Field-Marshal Sir William Slim, considered a visit to Turkey by General Robertson most important because the British wished to know Turkish war plans and ensure that the Turkish Command looked to Commanders-in-Chief Middle East (and not the Americans) as the coordinators of defence in the region. However, the British did not respond immediately, hoping to gather forces from the Commonwealth to justify the leading role which they wanted to assume.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, Foreign Office and military officials believed that it was highly likely that during the UK-Turkish military talks the British and allied weakness would be relieved; General Robertson even argued that in case of war, the British should not help Turkey by troops, to avoid putting in danger their base in Egypt and the British line of communication and supply.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, the British acknowledged that 'direct British aid, apart from limited air support is unlikely to be provided until Dominion troops can arrive in the theatre from Australia and New Zealand' when it would be probably too late.<sup>87</sup> General Robertson finally visited Turkey and held discussions with the Turkish leadership on 23-24 February 1951.

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<sup>84</sup> TNA/FO/371/95285/RK1073/44G, Ankara to FO No.66, 6-March-1951.

<sup>85</sup> TNA/FO/371/95283/RK1073/50G, FO to MOD, 11-January-1951; TNA/FO/371/95283/RK1073/10G, CIGS to CINCMELF 081550, 8-January-1951.

<sup>86</sup> TNA/FO/371/95284/RK1073/31G, Memorandum on Turkey and Defence, 22-February-1951; TNA/FO/371/95283/RK1073/4/G, Robertson to WO CIC/16/GHQ, 1-January-1951.

<sup>87</sup> TNA/FO/371/95283/RK1073/15G, Ankara to FO, 15-January-1951.

Although the Turks were pleased by the attention they received, in February 1951 they made it plain to the Americans that they wanted a clear security guarantee as a credible deterrent against the USSR. If the United States wanted to have Turkey's full cooperation during peacetime and assure its co-belligerency in the event of a general war, a US security commitment to Ankara should be granted. Without a US security commitment, the Americans feared that Turkey might drift towards neutrality, as Iran appeared to be doing at the time under its Prime Minister Mossadegh. Finally, a US security commitment to Turkey would constitute the most effective deterrent to Soviet aggression against not only Turkey, but along the entire Northern Tier.<sup>88</sup>

When the formation of a Mediterranean pact was excluded for fear of command confusion and probable difficulties in the US Congress, the JCS (especially its Chairman, General Omar Bradley, and the CNO, Admiral Forrest Sherman) emerged in April-May 1951 along with the State Department and SACEUR General Dwight Eisenhower as strong advocates of Greek and Turkish inclusion into NATO. The movement to include Greece and Turkey in NATO had considerable bi-partisan support both inside and outside NATO.<sup>89</sup> Although at that stage the US officials also took the Turkish participation in the MEC project as granted, the US military recognised the critical role Turkey could play in protecting the West's right flank in Europe, in diverting large numbers of Soviet troops to the Turkish theatre, and in facilitating the defence of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. If the Soviets decided to sweep around Turkey through Iran and Iraq and if Turkey opted for neutrality, military planners recognised that the West would have great difficulty implementing its strategy and defending the region. The prospect of wasting the

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<sup>88</sup> Kuniholm, 'The Evolving', pp.39-57; Athanassopoulou, *Turkey*, pp.198-201.

<sup>89</sup> TNA/FO/371/95002/R1071/8, Washington to FO No.11945/16/51, 2-April-1951.



millions of dollars that had already been spent on the construction of airfields in Turkey was also alarming. Therefore -and since Washington considered Greece and Turkey as one geostrategic entity- the US policy makers decided in May 1951 to pursue the full admission of Greece and Turkey into NATO.<sup>90</sup> the Americans also judged that Iran, which would not receive any guarantee, would be less disturbed by Greek and Turkish membership of NATO than by direct US guarantees to these countries.<sup>91</sup>

For their part, the British expected that the MEC should and would serve as a vehicle to bolster the faltering British position in the region. London's primary concern was to put Turkish (and possibly Greek) forces under a British Commander and involve a US element in the defence of the Middle East. The British did not wish Turkish membership to NATO because they worried that Turkey 'will be drawn into the SHAPE [Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe] orbit at the expense of Middle East defense' and they informed the Americans accordingly: it was the British position that the Greek and Turkish forces had to be placed under SACME, not under Commander-in-Chief Southern Europe (CINCSOUTH).<sup>92</sup> Moreover, the British proposed the creation of an allied naval Mediterranean Command which would encompass all naval forces in the region (including the US Sixth Fleet) and would be headed by a British Supreme Commander. The aim was once more primarily political: The British government and the military services were trying to bolster the British position in the Mediterranean in an attempt to tie it in with the British position in the Middle East and increase UK influence in the whole region. London was desperately

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<sup>90</sup> Leffler 'Strategy, Diplomacy', pp.807-25; Onozawa, pp.117-48; Michael Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945-1954* (London; Portland: Frank Cass, 1997), p.258.

<sup>91</sup> TNA/FO/371/95285/RK1073/38G, Washington to FO No.201, 2-March-1951.

<sup>92</sup> Onozawa, 'Formation', pp.117-48.

seeking to retain its predominant role there and was trying to reverse the post-war US military and political ascendancy in the area.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, an Anglo-American debate was taking place as to whether Greece and Turkey should be associated with the European or the Middle East theatre of operations; a division of opinion had emerged between the British and the US military planners, particularly over the role of Turkey. The British argued that Turkey was a Middle Eastern state and favoured Turkish association with a Middle East Command, which would in turn be connected to NATO through the Standing Group of the Alliance<sup>94</sup>. Britain was facing enormous difficulties to attract any Middle East state to a Middle East security pact: the British decline had become obvious, the Arab world was highly suspicious of Britain due to the latter's recent imperialist past, while the Arabs regarded the Israelis rather than the Soviets as the main threat. Therefore, the British believed that the establishment of such a pact linked with NATO might attract some Middle East states to join it, perhaps even Egypt. Therefore, they hoped that the connection of Turkey, and perhaps Greece, with a Middle East security pact and, indirectly, with NATO, could offer a simultaneous solution to the issues of the establishment of MEC and the association of Greece and Turkey with NATO.<sup>95</sup>

The Americans claimed that the European theatre should have priority and regarded Turkey as a Mediterranean power useful for the support of NATO's Southern Flank. Its commander, US Navy Admiral Robert Carney argued that as the United States provided the great majority of arms supplies to Turkey, the latter should enter

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<sup>93</sup> *FRUS*, 1951, III [p.1], pp.479-83,522-3

<sup>94</sup> TNA/FO/371/95283/RK1073/18G, CINCMED to Admiralty No.241730, u/d (late January 1951).

<sup>95</sup> TNA/FO/371/95284/RK1073/31G, Memorandum on Turkey and Defence, 22-February-1951; also David Devereux, *The Formulation of British Defence Policy towards the Middle East, 1948-56* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 47, and Cohen, *Fighting*, p.127.

NATO and be placed under his command. Furthermore, Carney, along with other American officials, accurately assumed that the Turks (and the Greeks) were not only anxious to join NATO, but if they were included to any form of collective defence pact, they would be unwilling to place their forces under British command. However, the Turks assured the British that once Turkey had joined NATO, they would be ready to consider and undertake their part in Middle East defence.<sup>96</sup>

Despite those divergences of opinion between the US and UK officials, the British remained adamant in their belief that a common policy with the United States should be achieved; they wanted to commit the Americans to joining the defence of the Middle East and to 'giving advice to the Turks under the aegis of a British Middle East Command'.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, the British realized that the Americans were determined to proceed with the admission of Greece and Turkey into NATO.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, they assumed that Turkey's inclusion into NATO would draw the United States closer towards the Middle East and that Turkey would become less reluctant to join a defence pact for the Middle East; thus, the advantages of Turkish membership in NATO would outweigh any disadvantages. However, in summer 1951 the British, and particularly the Chiefs of Staff, kept insisting that Turkey (and Greece) should not be part of Eisenhower's European Command (SHAPE), but be placed under a British Supreme Allied Commander Middle East (SACME).<sup>99</sup> They also claimed that without reaching an agreement upon allied Command in the Middle East area, the problem of Command in the Mediterranean could not be solved; only then it would be possible to

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<sup>96</sup> Yeşilbursa, 'Turkey's Participation', pp.70-102; Ioannis Stefanidis, *Apo ton Emfylio ston Psychro Polemo: he Hellada kai o symmachikos paragontas (1949-1952)* [From Civil War to Cold War: Greece and the allied factor (1949-1952)] (Athens: Proskinio, 1999), p.74.

<sup>97</sup> TNA/FO/371/95285/RK1073/46G, Cheetham Minute, 15-March-1951.

<sup>98</sup> TNA/FO/371/95002/R1071/8, Washington to FO, 2-April-1951.

<sup>99</sup> Yeşilbursa, 'Turkey's Participation', pp.70-102

reach a final solution as to how Greece and Turkey should be linked to or fitted into NATO. This was the official British view until July 1951.<sup>100</sup>

Regarding the allied Middle East Command, the British military believed that it should be an integrated command and its headquarters should include US, UK, French, Commonwealth and Turkish officers, under a British Supreme Allied Commander and placed, if necessary, elsewhere than in Egypt. It was understood that the United States would not be committed at this point to make forces available for the defence of the area in peacetime. As regards the question of whether such a command should be a NATO command directly responsible to the Standing Group (and not to SACEUR), or an independent command only associated somehow to NATO, several pros and cons existed: on the one hand, in case of establishment of a new NATO command, this would avoid the necessity for the negotiation of a new organisation, it would make available for the Middle East defence the potential of NATO and would automatically solve the issue of Turkish admission to NATO. On the other hand, there might be considerable political difficulties in the enlargement of NATO in an area where many members of the alliance had no interest and would therefore object to such an extension of their obligations. At any rate, from the military point of view, such a command would be largely dependent upon and should be linked with NATO. It was essential to ensure that only those NATO states which had a real interest in the Middle East would participate, or have a strong say, in this command, and also that non-NATO countries which had special interest in the defence of the area, like certain Commonwealth countries, would be associated with that command.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> NATO/S.G.152, Note on Command in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 26-June-1951.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

Concerning the allied naval command in the Mediterranean, whose establishment, according to the British Chiefs, had to follow that of the MEC, the UK proposed the following arrangement: under the British SACME should be a British naval Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, who would control the British forces and bases throughout the Mediterranean, be responsible for the convoys to the Middle East and therefore have particular interest in the Eastern Mediterranean. Moreover, the CINCSOUTH, who was also C-in-C US naval forces Mediterranean, would control his own forces and bases throughout the sea to secure SACEUR's Southern Flank and would have certain interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean in addition to his main responsibilities in the western and central Mediterranean; he would also make special arrangements to safeguard vital French interests in the western Mediterranean concerning the movement of shipping between North Africa and Southern Europe. According to the British officials, Turkey ought to be admitted into the MEC, but, since the CINCSOUTH would be closely interested in the defence of the Dardanelles and the Aegean, the Turks should be also represented at the Allied Forces South (AFSOUTH) headquarters by a liaison mission. Greece, however, ought to form part of CINCSOUTH (and therefore of SACEUR) and be represented at the MEC headquarters by a liaison mission.<sup>102</sup>

However, the Turks were clearly unwilling to accept Britain as their potential security guarantor, especially after General Robertson had informed them in February 1951 of the British inability to defend the Outer Ring. In early July the British concurred, not without reluctance, to accept Turkey's admission to NATO and informed Ankara that this was conditional on Turkish contribution to the MEC. Turkey was infuriated and took the position, informally at first stage, that it would

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

participate in the MEC only when admitted to NATO. While the Americans still desired to place the Turkish forces under a British commander, they dissented from London's attitude and claimed that Turkey's admission to NATO should be unconditional and that Turkish views on the command arrangements in NATO and MEC should be respected.<sup>103</sup>

In mid-May 1951 the US representative in the NATO Council Deputies (this comprised of the official representatives of each member state at NAC, and from 1953 onwards they were called Permanent Representatives, or, more commonly, Ambassadors to NATO) claimed that the question of the relationship of Greece and Turkey to the alliance be discussed as soon as possible. He also made plain that Washington was favouring Greek and Turkish full membership. Nevertheless, the initial response of the other members was generally chilly, and reservations were expressed by the Dutch and Belgian representatives, while the Norwegian and Danish reservations were already known.<sup>104</sup> Initially, Portugal also had reservations for the Greek and Turkish admission to NATO. Lisbon did not object to the inclusion of the above countries per se, but strongly desired that Spain be admitted as well; if the latter were not included, Portugal favoured the formation of a Mediterranean pact under US auspices to include Greece and Turkey, but not a NATO enlargement.<sup>105</sup>

Except for the US, which was pursuing the issue of full Greek and Turkish membership to NATO, the other member-state that strongly favoured NATO's enlargement was Italy. It argued that the inclusion of the two states into NATO and their full integration in the Western military machine would constitute a substantial

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<sup>103</sup> Onozawa, 'Formation', pp.117-48.

<sup>104</sup> TNA/PREM/8/1379, Hoyer-Millar to FO, 17-May-1951.

<sup>105</sup> IPA, File 228/58, Madrid to Athens, 687, 16-June-1951, and Lisbon to Athens, 731/A, 23-May-1951.

addition of forces and enhance NATO's military capabilities, especially in Southern Europe. Therefore, the Italian government, confronted with those vital considerations, considered that such questions as whether Greece and Turkey were, geographically, part of the Atlantic area or whether their cultural/political characteristics qualified them for membership of NATO were of secondary importance. On the contrary, the Italian position was that NATO's extension to Greece and Turkey would be compatible with its regional character, would complete Mediterranean defence and initiate the settling down of the Middle East defence organisation. It was also stressed that Greece had in the past few years withstood prolonged internal and external Communist pressure, and that Turkey, when subjected to Soviet diplomatic pressure for a new settlement on the Straits status, had stood firm. Furthermore, Rome believed that the admission of Greece and Turkey to NATO would break the deadlock in the Near East, strengthen the West and check neutralist tendencies in Turkey.<sup>106</sup>

Meanwhile, on 18 June the establishment of NATO's Southern European Command (including just Italy, for the time being) and the appointment of Admiral Robert Carney as Commander-in-Chief Southern Europe (CINCSOUTH) was formally announced by SHAPE. Carney continued to command the US naval forces in Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (including the US Sixth Fleet). Moreover, the Italian General Maurizio Castiglione was appointed Commander Land Forces Southern Europe (COMLANDSOUTH), while the USAF Major General David Schlatter was appointed Commander Air Forces Southern Europe (COMAIRSOUTH).<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> NATO/SGM-1136-51, Memorandum on Association of Greece and Turkey with NATO, 18-July-1951.

<sup>107</sup> *FRUS*, 1951, III, p.535.

In summer 1951 the negotiations between the three major NATO powers, and especially the United States and Britain, regarding the problems of Greek and Turkish admission and the command arrangements in Mediterranean and the Middle East, culminated. These negotiations were taking place both in the Standing Group (with France's participation) and on a bilateral basis. The United States were pressing for Greece's and Turkey's full admission to NATO as equal partners, without reservation, and regarded the above decision as primarily a political one – contrary to the British view. Moreover, the US officials opposed the formation of a separate Mediterranean pact/command, which the British favoured. Indeed, the NATO bodies seemed finally to acknowledge that the primary concern was to solve the political question; once this had been done a suitable and effective command structure could be established, the general lines of which would not vary much whatever the political solution might be.<sup>108</sup>

Although the Standing Group and the Military Representatives had expressed the view that, in principle, proposals for a military organization should follow and be based upon political arrangements, it was also recognized that the NATO members ought to have an outline of the military organisation into which Greece and Turkey might fit before they could come to the decision on the admission of these two countries. Therefore, in late August of 1951, without prior consultation with the Greeks and the Turks and prior to the NAC meeting at Ottawa, the Standing Group submitted a preliminary study (the S.G.80/4) to the national General Staffs of the NATO members. This outlined a probable military organisation and command setup in

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<sup>108</sup> NATO/S.G.78<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 26-July-1951; NATO/S.G.80<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 9-August-1951; NATO/M.R.C.17<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 13-August-1951.



the Mediterranean and the Middle East, into which Greece and Turkey might fit in the event of their adherence to NATO.<sup>109</sup>

According to S.G.80/4, the defence of the Middle East was a matter which concerned all NATO nations and, although certain NATO countries did not wish to assume obligations in Middle Eastern affairs, an Allied Command for the Middle East Theatre should be established. Turkey's primary strategic interests lay in the Middle East, and it was in this area that it could make its most valuable contribution to allied defence; naturally, it was also recognised that Turkey had significant interests in Southern Europe: by controlling the Dardanelles it would contribute significantly in the defence of Southern Europe. Therefore, Turkish defence arrangements had to be linked with those for Southern Europe. Greece, on the other hand, was more closely tied to Europe than to the Middle East; if Greece and Turkey were admitted to NATO, both should be members of the NATO Military Committee and the Military Representatives Committee, but Greece should form part of SACEUR's Southern European Command while Turkey, although a NATO nation, should be primarily associated with defence arrangements for the Middle East. Moreover, a Supreme Allied Commander and Headquarters should be established (consisting initially of US, UK, French, Turkish and Commonwealth officers) to command the Allied Middle East Theatre. The Supreme Allied Commander Middle East should be British. The allied Middle East Command should be divided into two sub-commands, a northern sector under Turkish Command which should be effectively co-ordinated with SACEUR's Southern Flank in view of the Dardanelles' importance, and a southern sector under British Command. Finally, it was proposed that two principal allied Naval Commands in the Mediterranean be established (each consisting of several sub-

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<sup>109</sup> NATO/S.G.80/4, Report on Command in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 22-August-1951.

commands), one subordinate to SACEUR and the other subordinate to SACME, each primarily responsible for the support of its respective Supreme Commander.<sup>110</sup>

The proposals of S.G.80/4 raised various issues especially in the light of developments in the Ottawa NATO summit held from 15 to 21 September 1951, where Greece and Turkey were invited to join NATO. First of all, the British declared that they would unconditionally support Greek and Turkish admission provided that previously there would be a Tripartite US-UK-French agreement on the MEC. Furthermore, the French were eager to give their approval under the condition that a French general would be appointed to the Middle East and that a French naval command in the Western Mediterranean would be established.<sup>111</sup> In addition, the Italians expressed the desire that they and the Greeks be represented on the Middle East Military Committees and that they might decide to participate in the MEC.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, although the Greeks recognised that they did not have direct interest in Middle Eastern defence and wanted to avoid undertaking extra responsibilities, there were thoughts in Athens that it would be advisable to participate in a MEC, if ever established; the main concern was the future of Cyprus, and Greece feared that the future close cooperation of Turkey with the three (or four) main western powers might drive Turkey to encourage British intransigence over the future of the island. In any case, the Greeks were not eager to assume the initiative but only to follow the Italians, if the latter decided to join MEC.<sup>113</sup> Most significantly, the Turks were not ready to accept S.G.80/4 as a solution. Finally, some representatives of non-Standing Group

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> TNA/ PREM/8/1379, Records of conversations and meetings held during the visit of Foreign Secretary, Herbert Morrison to Ottawa, 15 to 20 September 1951.

<sup>112</sup> NATO/S.G.80/5, Report on Command in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 10-September-1951; NATO/M.C.38, Report on Command Arrangements for the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 17-November-1951.

<sup>113</sup> Historical Archive of Greek Foreign Ministry (hereafter:HAGFM/) 1951/File133/6, Note (unknown writer), 18-July-1951.

nations, particularly the Dutch, expressed doubts about SG.80/4 at Ottawa and these have been repeated in the Council Deputies.

Therefore, the Standing Group decided to consider other solutions as well, and balance the relative advantages and disadvantages of S.G.80/4 and of the following additional alternatives: a) the setting up of a new Balkan Command consisting of Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia (or of a new Aegean Command to include Greece and Turkey) either under Admiral Carney or directly under the Standing Group; b) the setting up of a new Balkan/Eastern Mediterranean Supreme Command, consisting of Greece, Turkey and the Middle East, under a British Supreme Allied Commander; c) the integration of Turkey into SACEUR's Southern Flank; d) the establishment of a separate Turkish Command directly under the Standing Group.<sup>114</sup>

### **iii) *The Greek and Turkish admission, September 1951-February 1952***

Following these developments, numerous discussions and intense negotiations took place during the last three months of 1951 regarding the command arrangements in the Mediterranean and the Middle East and the final inclusion of Greece and Turkey to NATO. In October, General Omar Bradley, Field Marshal William Slim and General Lecheres, Chiefs of the US, UK and French armed forces respectively, visited General Eisenhower's Headquarters in Paris, and then Athens and Ankara where they held

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<sup>114</sup> NATO/S.G.96<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 25-October-1951; NATO/M.C.38, Report on Command Arrangements for the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 17-November-1951.

discussions with Greek and Turkish officials. In Paris General Bradley, Field Marshal Slim, General Lecheres and General Juin held discussions on the military problem of the admission of Greece and Turkey into NATO with SACEUR Eisenhower and his chief of staff, General Alfred Gruenther. They reached agreement on the French naval sub-command in the Western Mediterranean, which would be under Admiral Carney. Then, General Eisenhower said that he was willing to accept Greece under his command, since the defence of Greece, Italy and Yugoslavia were pretty much tied together, although such a development would extend considerably the Southern Flank; he would also need additional air and naval support. He expressed great admiration for the Turks but felt that they were too far away to include them in his command; they rather had to be in MEC or in another command directly under the Standing Group. Moreover, he stressed the importance of the bases in Egypt, which would greatly strengthen his flank and rear.<sup>115</sup>

Afterwards, the Chiefs of the armed forces of the Standing Group powers went to Greece, and then to Turkey. At that moment the British pursued two goals: firstly, irrespective of the place of the Greek mainland in the NATO command structure, to ensure that the Greek naval forces and the Aegean islands would come under SACME; secondly, to persuade Turkey that its proper place in the command structure was in MEC and not in a European Command.<sup>116</sup> The British failed to accomplish these two aims, though.

In Greece, the three Chiefs held discussions with the Greek military leadership. The Greeks expressed their strong desire to be part of SACEUR's

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<sup>115</sup> NATO/S.G.97<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 30-October-1951; NATO/M.C.38, Report on Command Arrangements for the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 17-November-1951.

<sup>116</sup> TNA/WO/216/795, Rose to Lt. Col. Harrington, 24-October-1951.

command, because they believed that Greece, Italy and Yugoslavia were SACEUR's right flank.<sup>117</sup> The three NATO Chiefs presented certain operational requirements and discussed Greek capabilities to meet them. The Greek military stressed the necessity for close cooperation with Yugoslavia, even to the extent of admitting Yugoslavia into NATO. Moreover, they hoped to coordinate military planning with Belgrade so that such planning would readily tie in with Greek defence. Regarding the Greek Navy, the Greek officials claimed that in case it had to operate under, or with, another command (namely the MEC through a British-led Mediterranean Command as it was envisaged in S.G.80/4), a considerable surplus of forces was needed, because Greek naval forces were inadequate. The necessity of screening the Greek personnel and using secure means of communication were also discussed. Finally, the Greek military emphasized their potential if they only had the arms and the means of strengthening their army. The three NATO Chiefs were impressed by the Greek friendliness and determination to resist any aggressor who might try to invade Greece.<sup>118</sup>

Then Bradley, Slim and Lecheres went to Ankara to exchange views with the Turkish authorities as to the most effective role Turkey could play in the NATO defence arrangements and to obtain Turkish agreement, at least in principle, to participate in the MEC project. During the Ankara meetings, the Turkish Prime Minister, Adnan Menderes, undertook an active role as a chairman for the meetings. When Slim mentioned that it was doubtful whether General Eisenhower could extend his front to include both Greece and Turkey, the Turkish leadership made it plain that they did not consider themselves as part of the Middle East; although they had agreed to the necessity for setting up a MEC and were willing to participate in it and

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> NATO/S.G.97<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 30-October-1951; NATO/M.C.38, Report on Command Arrangements for the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 17-November-1951.

contribute troops, they considered their country as a Balkan, European and Western power, and insisted on being admitted to an existing NATO command. Menderes claimed that Turkey should become a member of NATO with equal rights with other NATO countries, and said that politically it would be impossible to place Turkey in the Middle East; to include Turkey in a MEC, which in Turkish view would be only associated with NATO, was equivalent to placing it in an inferior position vis-à-vis other NATO countries. Therefore, it was clearly demonstrated that the Turkish views were far away from those envisaged in S.G.80/4. So, it was agreed that Turkey (and Greece) should send a military representative to Washington to discuss the command organisation into which Turkey would be brought.<sup>119</sup>

As negotiations continued during autumn 1951, the Standing Group was not in a position to submit recommendations for the command structure to be set up in the Mediterranean and the Middle East on the admission of Greece and Turkey to NATO. Comments on the proposals made in S.G.80/4 were made by the Chiefs of the General Staff of several NATO countries. Perhaps the most important were those of the Italian military. They claimed that the defence of the Balkan positions and that of the Straits should be an integral part of the defence of Southern Europe and should remain under the unified command of CINCSOUTH in its existing structure. Moreover, concerning the division of the maritime zones, the Aegean Sea had to remain under CINCSOUTH. Furthermore, the Italians declared that ‘it is absolutely necessary that the command of land forces of Southern Europe should remain assigned to an Italian Commander’ and that ‘this command should be an integrated command located in Italy under CINCSOUTH, and should have at its dependence the Command of the

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<sup>119</sup> NATO/S.G.97<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 30-October-1951; NATO/M.C.38, Report on Command Arrangements for the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 17-November-1951.

Italian land front and the Command of the Balkan front which will be placed under SACEUR'. However, the Standing Group did not consider that the command of the land forces in Italy and Greece could be under the same land force commander but visualised Greece as a separate command.<sup>120</sup>

For their part, Greece and Turkey strongly opposed a possible placement of their land forces under an Italian commander. The reasons were political, psychological and military. For the Greeks especially, although the post-war relations with Italy had been friendly and the latter was strongly favouring Greek admission to NATO, the Greek government, military leadership and public were not ready to accept placing the Greek Army under Italian command only eleven years after fascist Italy's unprovoked aggression against Greece in 1940. The Greek military had little appreciation for the military virtues of the Italian officer corps. Moreover, any Italian direct or indirect military presence might have serious repercussions on Greek-Italian and Yugoslav-Italian relations. Therefore, the Greeks proposed that the best solution would be the creation of a separate South-Eastern land command under a US or British commander, placed under CINCSOUTH. Although the Italian leadership had approached Athens asking not to oppose the expansion of Castiglione's command, the Greeks received assurances from the Americans, the British and the French that the Greek forces would not be placed under an Italian commander.<sup>121</sup>

Meanwhile, Greece and Turkey made further clear their views regarding their position in NATO command organisation and Western defence planning. By October

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<sup>120</sup> NATO/M.C.38, Report on Command Arrangements for the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 17-November-1951.

<sup>121</sup> HAGFM/1951/File133/6[1], Note on the command of Greek Armed Forces within the Atlantic Pact, 1-September-1951; HAGFM/1951/File118/6, Note on the leadership of Atlantic Forces, Greek sector, 27-September-1951; HAGFM/1951/File168/2, London to Greek Foreign Ministry No.4961, 18-November-1951.

1951 the Americans and the British had accepted that Greek forces be placed under CINCSOUTH, but the Turks rejected the idea of being incorporated only in the MEC structure. In their eyes, this would make Turkish membership of NATO nominal. This position reflected their anxiety to be considered and treated as a European and not a Middle Eastern nation, as well as their calculation that Turkey's security would be far better enhanced through NATO, whose leading power was the United States, rather than through the British-led MEC. Last but not least, the Turkish leaders estimated that they would receive much more US military aid if placed in a US-led command.<sup>122</sup> The British were frustrated by Turkey's insistence to be placed under SHAPE which they believed had been encouraged by the US Ambassador Wadsworth and by the Chief of Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey (JAMMAT), General Arnold. The British considered that Ankara had not grasped the importance of the dual role which it would be called to perform in relation to NATO on the one hand and the Middle East on the other.<sup>123</sup>

The Turkish Foreign Ministry sent an *aide memoire* which pointed out that Ankara considered the issues of Turkish admission to NATO and of the establishment of a MEC as two distinct problems which should be dealt with separately and in two different stages. While NATO was an existing community, the rights and obligations and members of which were defined and which Turkey was about to join, the MEC was still a project. The Turkish view was that given this situation, the most normal course would be firstly to determine the place which Turkey was to assume within the framework of NATO, and subsequently to attempt to materialise a MEC. It was

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<sup>122</sup> TNA/WO/216/795, Rose to Lt. Col. Harrington, 24-October-1951; TNA/PREM/8/1379, Defence Ministry to B.J.S.M. in Washington, 18-October-1951; also Onozawa, 'Formation', pp.117-48; Athanassopoulou, *Turkey*, pp.217-227; Yeşilbursa, 'Turkey's Participation', pp.70-102.

<sup>123</sup> TNA/WO/216/795, Rose to Lt. Col. Harrington, 24-October-1951.



pointed out that those NATO members who were to participate in the setting up of the MEC had already been placed within the framework of NATO. Therefore, the Turks indicated that if Turkey were to be integrated in a *sui generis* arrangement between NATO and MEC, which was then only a project, they would consider this as an exceptional and discriminatory treatment in comparison with the other NATO members. This would have serious negative repercussions upon the Turkish public. Furthermore, the Turks argued that whatever the form of a future MEC, it would tend to disperse the Turkish forces and divert and tie them to the Middle East which would burden Turkey with obligations over and above its prospective commitments within the Atlantic pact. In addition, they stressed the need first to assure their own security, since they were in contact with the potential aggressor, and then to extend the limits of the security area beyond their own boundaries; but if Turkey were included in NATO's European Command and its defence assured, it would be, due to its key strategic position, all the more in a position to safeguard the Middle East<sup>124</sup>.

However, the Turks were careful enough to stress that they considered the establishment of a MEC as a necessary, urgent and important project. Since they realised that the United States was not willing, at least in the immediate future, to expand its commitments to the Middle East, it was all the more clear that Turkey had to take its place within a NATO command, in which all commitments would be finally specified, and only proceed to expand its obligations only after it had assured its own security.

As to the question of the proper command to which Turkey should be attached within NATO, the Turks claimed that this should be SHAPE under General

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<sup>124</sup> NATO/M.C.38, Report on Command Arrangements for the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 17-November-1951; *FRUS*, 1951, V, p.218.

Eisenhower. As they indicated, this was because Turkey dominated directly or indirectly all the principal routes from the east to the Mediterranean. In case of war with the USSR, counteroffensives directed against the latter could be launched by NATO forces from Germany, the Balkans, the Black Sea and the Caucasus; on three out of the above four routes, Turkey occupied a position of primary importance, since it was the only [prospective] NATO country in a position to strike at Soviet communications through the Black Sea and the Danube. Turkey was also situated at the closest distance to Soviet industry centres, oil infrastructure and raw materials.<sup>125</sup>

Concerning the argument that with the addition of Turkey the limits of the European Command would be overextended, the Turks claimed that the front would not increase in actual length but rather be advanced towards the East. They argued that a powerful element of defence both in terms of territory (especially the strategic depth) and military potentiality would be added in the Southern Flank. Upon Turkish inclusion, a new more defensible and compact front would be formed. Moreover, according to the Turkish view the perfection of modern weapons and means of transport could not justify an objection to the widening of the operational field of the European Command, caused by Turkey's inclusion. Consequently, Turkey was an integral and inseparable part of Europe which was facing 'Russia' and, therefore, its forces had to serve under SACEUR for strategic as well as geographical reasons.<sup>126</sup>

Greek views, especially regarding their adherence to the proper NATO command structure, were summarized by Lieutenant General Theodoros Grigoropoulos, Chief of the General Staff of National Defence. Although he

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<sup>125</sup> NATO/M.C.38, Report on Command Arrangements for the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 17-November-1951.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid; also Marcy Agmon, 'Defending the Upper Gulf: Turkey's Forgotten Partnership', *Journal of Contemporary History* 21/1 (January 1986), pp.81-97.

appreciated the important role which Greece could play in the defence of the Middle East by protecting communications in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western flank of Turkey and, primarily, by denying the occupation of its territory to the Soviets, he believed that the battle for the defence of Greece should mainly concern CINCSOUTH and should be coordinated with operations in Southern Europe. He argued that Greece, as part of the Balkans, was part of Europe and was not tied to the area of Iran, Iraq and Asia Minor, but, along with Yugoslavia, formed the natural right flank of the European front. Furthermore, from the Greek point of view, operations in the Julian Alps/Istria were clearly of greater and more direct concern than those of Iran or Iraq, while the Balkans seemed also to provide more favourable opportunities of counteroffensives – ideally into the Sofia plains by combined Greek and Yugoslav forces – than the Iran/Iraq area. Concerning Greece's importance specifically to CINCSOUTH, the Greek Chief argued that an attack against north-eastern Italy would be a preliminary or follow up action to one against Greece. Therefore, it would be of great interest to the Commander in Italy that Greece and Yugoslavia remain in friendly hands since from this area the left flank of any Soviet offensive against northern Italy could be threatened. In his view Soviet operations in northern Italy, Yugoslavia and Greece all formed part of one offensive, and defence measures should, therefore, be coordinated by one Commander.<sup>127</sup> In any case, at this stage all NATO powers had accepted the affiliation of Greek forces to CINCSOUTH's command.

Regarding the cooperation of Greek and Turkish forces, General Grigoropoulos claimed that it would not seem possible to maintain physical contact between Greek and Turkish forces in Europe unless the bulk of the Turkish army were

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<sup>127</sup> NATO/M.C.38, Report on Command Arrangements for the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 17-November-1951.

located north of the Straits. If and when sufficient Turkish forces could be concentrated in Europe, then a coordinated advance into Bulgaria by Greek, Yugoslav and Turkish forces would provide a good pattern for the counteroffensive. When such operations could be contemplated, then the Turkish, Yugoslav, and Greek forces should be in one Command. Under existing conditions, however, the Greek military did not consider that coordination between Greek and Turkish forces in Europe could be more than theoretical. The Aegean Sea was, however, of common interest and provided a reason for considering Western Turkey and Greece as one strategic area.<sup>128</sup>

Athens favoured Turkey's affiliation to SACEUR because the Greeks did not wish to be alone at the end of NATO's Southern Flank.<sup>129</sup> Greece was also greatly concerned to cover its right flank in Thrace, on the Greek-Turkish frontier, and hoped that if Turkey were integrated into a European, instead of a Middle East, command, the Turks would put more emphasis on the European theatre, rather on the eastern one (indeed, there were specific signs that both the Turks and the Americans, not to mention the British, were stressing the importance of the eastern Turkish theatre).<sup>130</sup> Finally, both the Greeks and the Turks feared that if Turkey were included in MEC, Greek and Turkish final membership might fall behind or even be put off, because of the probable revival of some member states' fears that they might be drawn into Middle Eastern affairs.<sup>131</sup>

Still, in October 1951 the Protocol on the accession of Greece and Turkey to NATO was signed by the Council Deputies. It was decided that the US government,

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Stefanidis, *Apo ton Emfylio*, p.85.

<sup>130</sup> HAGFM 1951/File118/5, Ankara to GFM 1944, 28-September-1951; HAGFM 1951/File118/6, Ankara to GFM 2045, 16-October-1951.

<sup>131</sup> HAGFM 1951/File118/6, Second Political Department to First and Third Political Departments of GFM 52179/Atl.Pact.2a, 11-October-1951.

on behalf of all NATO members, should communicate to the Greek and the Turkish governments an invitation to accede to NATO. Moreover, they agreed that when Greece and Turkey were formally invited to accede to the North Atlantic Treaty, an explanatory note should be given to the two countries which would specify that the exact interpretation of the words 'North Atlantic area' of the North Atlantic Treaty should remain unaffected.<sup>132</sup> This was mainly to continue excluding Cyprus from the NATO area without expressly so stating, because the British wanted the island to be part of the Middle East, not of Europe, and seemed to wish to avoid the presence of NATO (that is, Greek) troops on Cyprus.<sup>133</sup> However, it should be underlined that before the Ottawa summit the British COS had finally agreed that they would not object to the inclusion of Cyprus in the NATO area and instructions were accordingly sent to the UK delegation in Ottawa. After all, Cyprus was excluded from the NATO area because the French claimed that if Cyprus were included and covered by the alliance, Tunisia had to be included as well. Since this would have extended the NATO area to an undesirable degree, 'the Americans pressed us [the British] to drop our claim for Cyprus'. It was also decided by the Deputies that 'there was no need to inform the Turks and the Greeks of this decision, since there is nothing in the Protocol to suggest that Cyprus is covered'.<sup>134</sup>

In late December 1951 and early January 1952 the Standing Group and the International Planning Team discussed with the Greek and Turkish representatives and their planning officers the command arrangements which ought to be established for the integration of Greek and Turkish forces in the NATO command organisation. The

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<sup>132</sup> NATO/D-D(51)280, Protocol on the Accession of Greece and Turkey, 9-November-1951; NATO/D-D(51)275, Protocol of Accession of Greece and Turkey to NATO, 6-November-1951; NATO/C8-D/3, Reports to the Council by the Civilian Agencies of NATO, 23-November-1951.

<sup>133</sup> *FRUS*, 1951[p.1], III, p.593.

<sup>134</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/35, COS(51)683, 21-November-1951.

Greek and Turkish proposed that, first and foremost, the military forces of Greece and Turkey assigned to NATO should operate under SACEUR through CINCSOUTH. Furthermore, under CINCSOUTH, and responsible to him, there should be a Commander Greek Land Forces and a Commander Turkish Land Forces. In addition, air and naval support for the operations of the Greek and Turkish land forces should be provided by CINCSOUTH from the forces assigned to him, including those of Greece and Turkey; if additional air and naval forces (other than those described above) were assigned for the support of Greek and Turkish land forces, those should operate under the control of CINCSOUTH during the period they would be so assigned. Last but not least, CINCSOUTH should be responsible for any possible coordination of the operations of the forces of Italy and Greece with those of Yugoslavia.<sup>135</sup>

The other interested powers (the USA, Britain, France, and Italy) also expressed their views in January and early February of 1952 regarding the command arrangements on Greek and Turkish inclusion to NATO. The US position was that NATO should benefit fully and without delay from the Greek and Turkish forces, which were the dominant local forces in the Eastern Mediterranean, to strengthen the alliance's right flank; therefore, it was imperative that the necessary command arrangements should be worked out as soon as possible in order to be approved and established after Greece and Turkey became members of NATO. On the one hand, the Americans favoured the inclusion of the two countries in a NATO command, preferably that of SACEUR through CINCSOUTH, while the naval and air commanders under the latter should extend their responsibilities to include Greece, Turkey and the Eastern Mediterranean. On the other hand, they opposed the inclusion

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<sup>135</sup> NATO/S.G.80/7, Report on Greek and Turkish views on NATO Command Arrangements, 9-January-1952.

of the Middle East area in a NATO command, because several NATO members did not wish to undertake commitments to this area. Furthermore, they pointed out that ‘while maximum satisfaction must be given to political and national considerations, the command structure is of such vital importance that an arrangement which is militarily unworkable cannot be accepted for political or prestige reasons’.<sup>136</sup> This was obviously a strike at British attitude and manoeuvres.

In any case, until mid-February agreement had not been reached on the issue of the overall NATO command structure in the Mediterranean. Obviously, a complete solution could not be reached in the short remaining time before Greece and Turkey would become members of NATO at the forthcoming Lisbon meeting. The adoption of an interim solution for the integration of Greek and Turkish forces – politically acceptable to all nations concerned and militarily workable – seemed necessary. Therefore, NATO could carry out its responsibilities with respect to Greece and Turkey pending the solution of the overall Mediterranean command problem and would leave the task of linking NATO and MEC for resolution when the latter was established.<sup>137</sup>

In the US view, such an interim solution had to be the extension of SACEUR’s command to Greece and Turkey under CINCSOUTH, whose command organisation would remain as established, with such additions as might be necessary to accommodate the forces of Greece and Turkey.<sup>138</sup> While their land forces assigned to NATO should operate under CINCSOUTH, their naval and air forces should report to

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<sup>136</sup> NATO/M.C.38/1, Command Arrangements when Greece and Turkey become members of NATO, 9-February-1952.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> TNA/FO/371/102509/WU11955/19, Correspondence by Stanley Swinton, Accosiated Press, 13-February-1952.

the established Naval and Air Commanders of the Southern European Command who would coordinate the naval and air support of all three ground force elements of the Southern European Command, by utilising the assigned air and naval forces of the Southern European Command plus those of Greece and Turkey; an alternative solution could be that the Greek and Turkish naval forces might, as an interim measure, remain under their respective national Chiefs of Staff. Regarding the British naval forces in the Mediterranean, the US proposed that they remained assigned under the COS and responsible for the protection of their lines of communication; in case of emergency, they should be available to support the land battle in Southern Europe. The means of coordination of British naval forces in the Mediterranean with those of CINCSOUTH had to be ultimately worked out when the allied MEC was established and its link with NATO determined.<sup>139</sup>

For their part, the French believed that a partial solution to the wider questions of allied command arrangements in the Mediterranean and the Middle East should be reached to enable the full admission of Greece and Turkey into NATO at the Lisbon meeting and the prompt incorporation of their Armed Forces into a NATO command. Therefore, they proposed that the ground forces of Greece and Turkey assigned to NATO would operate under the overall command of SACEUR through CINCSOUTH, that the Greek and Turkish air forces assigned to NATO should report to the established Air Commander of the Southern European Command, and that their naval forces would remain under their national Chiefs of Staff; consequently, the only organisational change to the existing NATO command structure in the Mediterranean would be the addition of a Greek and Turkish Land Forces Command under

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<sup>139</sup> NATO/M.C.38/1, Command Arrangements when Greece and Turkey become members of NATO, 9-February-1952.



CINCSOUTH. Moreover, the French proposed that the command arrangements of SHAPE's Southern Flank should be worked out by SACEUR in agreement with national authorities and submitted to the Standing Group. They also stressed that the decision concerning the placement of Greek and Turkish forces in a NATO command should 'not prejudice in any way the overall solution arrived at, on the problem of command in the Mediterranean and Middle East'.<sup>140</sup>

The Italians, through the Defence Chief of Staff General Marras, insisted that should Greece and Turkey be included in SACEUR's Southern Flank, their land forces should be placed under General Castiglione's Allied Land Forces Southern Europe command. Furthermore, should a Deputy Commander to CINCSOUTH were nominated, he had to be no other than an Italian general. Otherwise, Rome warned that 'any other solution could not be acceptable to the Italian Government' and 'very severe repercussions might arise from a solution failing to satisfy the Italian aspirations'.<sup>141</sup>

Therefore, by late 1951 it was common basis of all major NATO powers (including the British), that on their admission to NATO both Greece and Turkey ought to be placed in the command structure of SACEUR. Consequently, two solutions were considered: either the establishment of a fourth Theatre Command consisting of Greece and Turkey and directly responsible to SACEUR, or the expansion and reorganisation of the existing Southern European Command to include

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

Greece and Turkey. Both solutions were considered as militarily workable and both had certain pros and cons.<sup>142</sup>

Regarding the first solution, it was argued that Greece and Turkey and their adjacent seas fell into one strategic area. Despite this, a campaign in the Caucasus would be more closely tied to the defence of the Middle East than to the defence of Greece and Western Turkey, but it was acknowledged that the geographical and operational division of Turkish territory and forces was politically unacceptable and had military disadvantages. However, it was emphasised that campaigns in the Balkans should be fully coordinated with any campaign on the Italian frontier and with whatever allies there might be in the area (i.e. the Yugoslavs); unified command throughout the Balkans would encourage Yugoslav support or active participation in the event of war.

Concerning the second option, it was argued that if Greece and Turkey were included to CINCSOUTH's command, this would commend itself to the Greeks and Turks, would make planning for a coordinated defence of the Balkans and Turkey possible, would be an economical solution since an existing headquarters and personnel could be utilised, would not lead to another subdivision in the command arrangements for naval and air operations in the Mediterranean, and, last but not least, if in the future additional Balkan allies became available, such command structure could readily absorb them, thus forming a continuous front from Italy to the Caucasus. Against those advantages it was pointed out that the Southern European Command

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid; TNA/DEFE/4/51, COS(52)1<sup>st</sup> Meeting, 1-January-1952.

would be greatly enlarged and that CINCSOUTH would undertake considerable extra responsibilities.<sup>143</sup>

The British were fully aware of the US, Turkish and Greek views, but remained preoccupied with their plans for the defence organisation of the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. However, they had accepted that Turkey should be placed under SACEUR. By early 1952 the British publicly as well as in the NATO bodies, tended to opt for Turkish inclusion in AFSOUTH.<sup>144</sup> Despite this, the British had not abandoned their original plan of commanding both Greek and Turkish forces, this time within the framework of NATO. Therefore, irrespective of their public position, they opted for the establishment of an Aegean Command under its own Commander-in-Chief, in order to avoid ‘an extension of the Carney empire’ eastwards. For their part, the JCS continued to favour the expansion of CINCSOUTH’s command, but initially tried to devise a compromise by promoting the establishment of a new Aegean (or Eastern) command under SACEUR, whose commander (CINCEAST) would be British and would command the Greek and Turkish forces<sup>145</sup>. However, the Chairman of the JCS, General Bradley, had already stressed that strong political considerations existed which had to be satisfied in so far as it was possible; those to a large extent overrode the military arguments: ‘any proposals which were put forward could be of a tentative nature only until they had been approved by both Greece and Turkey’.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> NATO/M.C.38/1, Command Arrangements when Greece and Turkey become members of NATO, 9-February-1952.

<sup>144</sup> TNA/DEFE/4/51, COS(52) 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting, 1-January-1952.

<sup>145</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/35, COS(51)726, 6-December-1951; *FRUS*, 1951, vol.III[1], pp.725-30.

<sup>146</sup> TNA/DEFE/4/49, COS(51)185<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 14-November-1951.

Indeed, the British wished to establish the Aegean (or Eastern) and Middle East Commands simultaneously and directly link them 'at the earliest possible moment' by having one of SACME's subordinates as CINC Aegean with responsibility to SACEUR for the defence of the Aegean Command<sup>147</sup>. In January 1952 the deputy SACEUR, Field Marshal Montgomery, justified the British view claiming that a possible extension of Carney's authority would make the situation more complex, since it would have been difficult for Carney to control a battle on the Italian front and one on the Turkish front at the same time. However, Montgomery believed that 'when the Middle East Command is finally set up, this fourth command of SHAPE could be transferred en bloc to the Middle East Command, where it really belongs'<sup>148</sup>. Nevertheless, few days later the CIGS Sir William Slim informed the Chiefs of the other services that the JCS had made a definite recommendation that Turkey and Greece should come under Admiral Carney<sup>149</sup>.

The British tendency to merge, rather than coordinate, the Aegean Command with the MEC, aroused the fear of several smaller NATO countries that they would be entangled to Middle Eastern affairs, while the Turks and the Greeks strongly opposed to place their forces under a British commander even within NATO. Consequently, at the end of 1951, the US civilian and military officials, annoyed at British manoeuvres, decided to give Greek and Turkish admission to NATO top priority by incorporating their forces to CINCSOUTH's command and put aside the MEC, at least for the moment; they managed to prevent any further discussions until the full and official

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<sup>147</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/35, COS(51)751, Annex 1, 17-December-1951.

<sup>148</sup> TNA/WO/216/498, Montgomery to Slim, M/233, 23-January-1952.

<sup>149</sup> TNA/WO/216/498, Slim to CAS and First Sea Lord, CIGS/BM/43/5430, 28-January-1952.

admission of Greece and Turkey to NATO and efficiently blocked any further British attempt to raise the issue of commands either on a bilateral level or in NATO<sup>150</sup>.

In early 1952, as the MEC project was not making any progress, the NATO Standing Group decided, on US insistence, that the Greek and Turkish land and air forces be placed under AFSOUTH. Although the British were infuriated by these developments, they could not do much. In January of 1952 the JCS reiterated their view that the Middle Eastern defence should be a British strategic responsibility, while the US leadership persuaded the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, to accept the appointment of a US Admiral as SACLANT, thus depriving the MEC project of one of its main objectives since the British were faced with a *fait accompli* and their claim for a Supreme Allied Commander post became irrelevant.<sup>151</sup>

### **Conclusion**

It can be argued that in late 1950 and in 1951, chiefly the British, but also the Americans as well, had as their first priority to establish their political influence and preponderance in the whole area of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Moreover, in the process, they managed to antagonise each other. Despite the anti-communism and the war scare in the West after the outbreak of the Korean War, Washington and London did not proceed as quickly as possible with the necessary and most effective measures to enhance the defence of Greece and Turkey and the whole

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<sup>150</sup> Stefanidis, *Apo ton Emfylio*, pp.84-85; Onozawa, 'Formation', pp.117-48.

<sup>151</sup> Onozawa, 'Formation', pp.135-136.

region. Although they were certainly concerned for the security of the region and their intense negotiations indeed reflected differences in military preoccupations and perceptions, it seems that the promotion of the various defence schemes, especially from the British side (the MEC and the Mediterranean Command projects and the Eastern/Aegean NATO Command), aimed to serve primarily national political goals. All the other interested parties, France, Italy, Greece and Turkey also sought to push their political objectives, several times at the expense of allied military effectiveness. All these took place at a time when the Cold War had greatly intensified and the West's insecurity had been exacerbated. It can therefore be concluded that the Western leaderships, though bound to prepare for any contingency, did not really believe that there was an imminent Soviet/Communist threat against the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Another issue was the fact that despite this antagonism, both the British and the Americans wanted, at least in principle, to cooperate with each other, settle their differences in bilateral negotiations – usually by reaching a compromise (more or less closer to US positions) – and then presenting their proposals to the other allies. This often caused the frustration of the latter, especially of France and Italy, and to some extent of Greece and Turkey. However, when the US-UK differences could not be bridged, the United States predominated; this was because the real power lay there, and the other allies (the NATO members, and Greece and Turkey) sided with Washington, rather than with London.

Furthermore, although it was Ankara that assumed the initiative and strongly pressed for admission to NATO, while it was considered by the major NATO powers as the keystone to the defence of the whole area of the Eastern Mediterranean and the

Middle East, it was Greece which as early as in summer of 1951 was acknowledged as a prospective NATO member and as an integral part of the European Command. This was despite the fact that Athens had followed low-profile diplomacy and was weaker politically and militarily. On the contrary, Turkey's definite inclusion in the European Command was finally decided only in early 1952 after strong US support, when the MEC project was not making any progress and any other solution had been considered as impossible. This had not been only due to British persistence and US ambivalence as to where Turkey should be placed; as the long but at present unsuccessful case of Turkish admission to the European Union has demonstrated, many in the West considered that the hard factors of geography, history, culture and heritage indicated that Turkey was more Middle Eastern, rather than European country.

## **2. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NATO'S SOUTHERN FLANK**

### **Command Reorganization and Arrangements and Regional Defence, February 1952-March 1953**

In February 1952 Greece and Turkey were officially admitted to NATO. Consequently, there was a need to devise an appropriate command structure in the southern region of the Atlantic Alliance to integrate the land, air, and naval forces of the two new NATO members. This was not, however, an easy task, particularly due to its linkage with the issues of the Mediterranean Command and the defence schemes in the Middle East (the MEC and then MEDO projects), where the Americans and the British had different views and priorities. Furthermore, NATO had to deal with the even more arduous challenge of developing an effective operational planning in the Southern Flank area, and particularly the Balkan frontier, which was one of the most exposed areas of the alliance. However, favourable political and military opportunities existed as well, since there was always the possibility of cooperation with Tito's Yugoslavia. Indeed, the Standing Group powers as well as Greece and Turkey sought from late 1952 onwards to improve their relations with Belgrade, and ultimately to initiate some form of military cooperation with the Yugoslavs. Despite Tito's willingness to proceed, it soon became clear that membership in NATO complicated the situation not only as regards the commitments that Athens and Ankara might be able to undertake towards Yugoslavia, but also concerning the guarantees that Washington, London and Paris were able, or willing, to provide. Although by early 1953 the West had failed to integrate Tito to the Western defence scheme,



considerable progress was being made towards the establishment of a regional Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav entente, which paved the way for close tripartite military cooperation. With respect to developments in the Middle East, during 1952-early 1953 the defence of the region was effectively separated from NATO politics and strategy. The Southern Flank's definition of command structure and the abandonment of the MEC/MEDO project appeared to make a link between the NATO and Middle East areas impossible, or even irrelevant.

***i) Greek and Turkish final inclusion into CINCSOUTH and the land, air, and naval command set-up in the southern region, February 1952- March 1953***

The Lisbon meeting in February 1952 was a significant turning point in NATO history. Apart from the official admission of Greece and Turkey as full members, the reorganization of institutional mechanisms of the alliance was also approved. The Council Deputies would be replaced by permanent representatives with increased responsibilities. Moreover, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) agreed to appoint a secretary-general, responsible to the council. Among his duties was to organize the work of the council and its agenda, to supervise the work of an international staff/secretariat and to chair the meetings of the permanent representatives. The first secretary-general was a British official, Lord Ismay, partly to compensate Britain for the transfer of SHAPE from London to Paris.<sup>152</sup> In addition, the NAC set excessive force goals to enhance NATO's conventional capabilities as early as possible (fifty

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<sup>152</sup> Lawrence Kaplan, *NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance (updated edition)* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), p.48.

divisions and 4.000 aircraft by the end of 1952, seventy-five divisions and 6.500 aircraft one year later, and ninety-six divisions and 9.000 aircraft by 1954, with thirty-five to forty divisions to be combat-ready). Of equivalent importance, a significant contribution of West Germany within the framework of a European army (the EDC project) was also approved.<sup>153</sup>

When Greece and Turkey officially joined NATO, the question where to include their forces within the NATO command structure arose in an even more acute way. As already mentioned, in early 1952 an interim agreement to place their land forces under CINCSOUTH had been reached, but there were numerous practical matters to be settled. A fundamental difference continued to exist between the British, who were trying to place Greece, and particularly Turkey, in a Middle Eastern context, and the Americans, who were thinking purely on terms of the European theatre and the NATO area. Therefore, the British preference was still for the inclusion of the Greek and Turkish forces to the proposed separate Mediterranean or Middle East Command.<sup>154</sup> However, when on 11 February 1952 the NATO Military Committee met to discuss and approve the Standing Group's report on the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the result was the M.C.38/2 paper. This eventually dealt only with the incorporation of Greek and Turkish forces into the NATO command structure, and specifically under CINCSOUTH, while the set-up of the Naval Mediterranean and the Middle East commands was postponed pending their future resolution.

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<sup>153</sup> Stephen Ambrose and Morris Honick, 'Eisenhower; Rekindling the Spirit of the West' in Robert Jordan (ed.), *Generals in International Politics: NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1987), pp.8-30.

<sup>154</sup> Pedlow, Gregory, 'The Politics of NATO Command, 1950-1962', in Simon Duke and Wolfgang Krieger (eds) *U.S. Military Forces in Europe: The Early Years, 1945-1970* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), pp.15-42.

In November 1951, Italy had asked that an Italian general subordinate to CINCSOUTH should command the Italian, Greek and Turkish land forces, a claim which they reiterated during the Lisbon meetings in February 1952.<sup>155</sup> However, as already mentioned, both Greece and Turkey were strongly opposed to that idea for political as well as operational reasons. In any case, Italy expressed its satisfaction with the incorporation of the Greek and Turkish forces into NATO and appreciated the need that they serve under the overall command of SACEUR. For their part, both the Greek and Turkish observers<sup>156</sup> indicated the preference of their governments that the Greek and Turkish forces respectively should serve under CINCSOUTH without an intermediate command. Then, the Italians claimed that the problem was not yet ripe for solution. Finally, during the Defence Ministers' meeting on 21 February the Italian Defence Minister announced that his government was withdrawing its reservation expressed previously.<sup>157</sup>

This was partly due to the close Greek-Turkish cooperation. During the Lisbon meeting Greece and Turkey 'made a very special point that it would be most unsatisfactory to them to have their land forces under an Italian General', deputy of CINCSOUTH Carney. Menderes had previously proposed to the Greek deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Sophocles Venizelos, that if the Americans wished to foster Italian prestige, a possible solution could have been the establishment of three deputy commanders (an Italian, a Greek, and a Turkish) who would constitute a committee under the chairmanship of the Italian officer. However, Venizelos dismissed

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<sup>155</sup> Athanasios Politis Archive (hereafter: APA/), 1952/File24, Athanasios Politis to Venizelos, no.756, 15-February-1952.

<sup>156</sup> On 19 December 1951 the Council Deputies had agreed that Greece and Turkey could send observers to NATO bodies; see NATO/D-R(51)90(Final), Summary Record of the Council Deputies Meeting, 4-January-1952.

<sup>157</sup> NATO/Record M.C.6<sup>th</sup> Session, Record of Military Committee Meeting, 13-February-1952.

the proposal as unworkable. Therefore, the Greeks and the Turks decided to by-pass officially the issue of a possible (Italian) deputy commander, and to make clear their position to the Italians.<sup>158</sup>

It was then decided that detailed command arrangements of the Southern European Command would be worked out by SACEUR in agreement with national authorities and be submitted to the Standing Group for approval by the Military Committee.<sup>159</sup> Finally, it was agreed that the ground and air forces of Greece and Turkey assigned to NATO would operate under the command of SACEUR through CINCSOUTH, but that 'pending settlement of overall naval command arrangements in the Mediterranean then under further discussion by the Standing Group, the Greek and Turkish naval forces will remain under their national Chiefs of Staff'<sup>160</sup>. Before that, the British side was very anxious to refute rumours that Britain was opposing the US suggestion for entry of Greece and Turkey into Admiral Carney's Command. London assured Ankara and Athens that it supported the inclusion of Turkish and Greek land forces in AFSOUTH.<sup>161</sup>

Nevertheless, the three Standing Group powers did not manage to reach immediately an agreement for the final command structure of the Southern Flank. 1952 saw the culmination of the Anglo-American negotiations for the establishment of the Mediterranean Command. The British wanted to get a major NATO command, mainly

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<sup>158</sup> HAGFM/1952/File25/7, Note of Undersecretary of State Enangelos Averoff, Athens, 28-April-1952; also Pedlow, 'The Politics of NATO', pp.15-42.

<sup>159</sup> NATO/M.C.38/2(Final), Command Arrangements Regarding Greece and Turkey, 21-February-1952.

<sup>160</sup> NATO/C9-D/15, Report by the Committee of Defence Ministers to the NAC, 22-February-1952; TNA/FO/371/1025010/WU11955/32, COS Committee, Notes for Supplementary for Parliamentary Question, 2-May-1952.

<sup>161</sup> TNA/FO/371/102509/WU11955/8, Ankara to FO, No.89, 12-February-1952; TNA/FO/371/102509/WU11955/8, FO to Ankara, No.120, 13-February-1952; TNA/FO/371/102509/WU10143/52G, Athens to FO, 2-February-1952.

for political reasons, and the Mediterranean seemed to offer an opportunity, since they still maintained significant forces and had traditional and continuing interests in the region.<sup>162</sup> However, the admission of Greece and Turkey to NATO and the US unwillingness to acquiesce in the establishment of a single Supreme Command in the Mediterranean under a British officer, would soon force Britain to moderate its demands. In late January 1952, the British representative at the NATO Standing Group, Air Marshal Sir William Elliot, had advised London to adopt a more flexible policy. If not, there was the danger of losing ‘the one possibility remaining to us in a command set-up which so far has developed thoroughly unsatisfactorily from our point of view’. The British should not insist that there should be a British Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean who would command both the Sixth Fleet and the British Mediterranean Fleet and would report directly to the Standing Group: on that issue ‘we should have almost the whole of NATO against us’. Therefore, he concluded, the British might lose the opportunity of at least securing a major command post of the Mediterranean naval forces.<sup>163</sup>

In fact, the COS remained firm for some time on their objective for the establishment of a British-led Naval Supreme Command in the Mediterranean which would include the bulk of allied naval forces.<sup>164</sup> If necessary, the COS appeared willing to agree that the unified Mediterranean Command would not include the Sixth Fleet.<sup>165</sup> In sum, in early 1952 the British position regarding the Mediterranean Command problem was the following: Britain should accept the inclusion of all land and air

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<sup>162</sup> Sean Maloney, *Securing Command of the Sea: NATO Naval Planning, 1948-1954* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995), p.186.

<sup>163</sup> TNA/FO/371/102509/WU11955/1G, Elliot to McLean, 24-January-1952.

<sup>164</sup> TNA/FO/371/102509/WU11955/5G, Chiefs of Staff to Elliot, 25-January-1952; TNA/DEFE/4/51, COS(52) 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 15-January-1952.

<sup>165</sup> TNA/FO/371/102509/WU11955/12G, Hood to Rumbold, 11-February-1952.

forces deployed in Italy, Greece and Turkey under Carney. Concerning the naval command setup, the best solution was for all naval forces in the Mediterranean to be placed 'unreservedly' under the command of a British Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces Mediterranean, who would be directly responsible to the Standing Group. However, if this would be unacceptable to the Americans, then it should be proposed that under the Standing Group, the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean would be responsible to SACEUR and SACME for their support, with the reservation that the Sixth Fleet would not be used for operations other than in support of SACEUR's Southern Flank without the agreement of SACEUR.<sup>166</sup>

But the Americans had other views. The NATO naval command to be established in the Mediterranean area had to be consonant with the fact that the Greek and Turkish land and air forces were part of CINCSOUTH's command under SACEUR, and that Greece and Turkey were in the areas of responsibility of those two commanders. Hence CINCSOUTH became responsible for the overall area of the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas, the Straits and the territorial waters of Turkey in the Black Sea. Therefore, to obtain maximum overall effectiveness of naval effort in coordination with the Southern Flank's land and air effort, all NATO naval and maritime air forces in the Mediterranean had to be assigned to CINCSOUTH's command, and not to another commander subordinate either directly to SACEUR or the Standing Group.<sup>167</sup> General Eisenhower in particular favoured this idea. He expressed the view that all allied naval forces in the Mediterranean should be placed under a single commander, but was adamant that the US Sixth Fleet, 'at least, must be

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<sup>166</sup> TNA/FO/371/102509/WU11955/5G, Ministry of Defence to B.J.S.M., 28-January-1952; TNA/DEFE/4/51, COS(52) 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 18-January-1952.

<sup>167</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/39, COS(52)247, 2-May-1952.

directly responsible to my orders through the Commander in Chief of the southern flank'.<sup>168</sup>

In February 1952, the British rejected an American proposal for an interim solution of the Mediterranean Command issue and of Greek-Turkish admission to NATO, until the establishment of the overall Command organization for the Mediterranean-Southern European area was finalised.<sup>169</sup> The British made it plain that the American proposal was both politically and militarily unacceptable to them; they felt that an arrangement which would place all non-British naval and air forces under either CINCSOUTH or SACEUR – even as an ‘interim measure’ – would prejudice the setting up of overall Mediterranean Naval and Air Commands.<sup>170</sup>

In fact, the JCS did not have a clear and definite view on the final setup of the Mediterranean Command. The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Fechteler, was worried that the British might insist on linking this issue with MEC (he himself recognized that in the event of war, the distinction between the NATO area and the Middle East would evaporate).<sup>171</sup> Finally, it was agreed that Fechteler would travel to London on 5 May to discuss the issue with the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Rhoderick McGrigor; before that, he would first consult with SHAPE, the French and the Italians. For his part, McGrigor would also hold similar discussions.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (hereafter: DDEL/), Eisenhower Papers/Pre-Presidential/Principal File, Box 41, Eisenhower to Fechteler, 27-February-1952.

<sup>169</sup> NATO/M.C.38/1, Report on Command Arrangements when Greece and Turkey become members of NATO, 9-February-1952.

<sup>170</sup> TNA/FO/371/102509/WU11955/2G, Elliot to Ministry of Defence, 7-February-1952.

<sup>171</sup> TNA/FO/371/102509/WU11955/22G, McLean to Elliot, 19-March-1952; TNA/FO/371/102509/WU11955/22G, Elliot to McLean, 21-March-1952.

<sup>172</sup> TNA/FO/371/102509/WU11955/24G, Elliot to COS, 1-April-1952; TNA/FO/371/1025010/WU11955/32, COS Committee, Notes for Supplementary for Parliamentary Question, 2-May-1952.

At that point, the British proposed that CINCSOUTH 'would continue to command Italian, Greek and Turkish land and air forces; he might also have command of such naval forces as were allocated to him for supporting his own operations, and this might include command of United States Sixth Fleet. The allied naval Commander-in-Chief would, however, have to coordinate all naval operations in Mediterranean, including the support of Middle East theatre and lines of communication through Mediterranean to that theatre'.<sup>173</sup> When the meeting took place, it was clear that both the British and the Americans were in agreement that there should be one allied naval Commander-in-Chief for the Mediterranean. However, the question remained whether this Commander-in-Chief should be subordinate to CINCSOUTH (the American view) or whether he should be directly responsible to the Standing Group (the British view).<sup>174</sup> The nationality of the allied naval Commander-in-Chief was not discussed.

Meanwhile, in May 1952 there were various reports that the French, Italians, Greeks and Turks had expressed to Admirals Fechteler and Carney their unwillingness to see their naval forces being placed under a different commander from their land and air forces. Carney in particular was endorsing (or even encouraging) these reactions. Thus, the British believed that 'it seems unlikely that we shall get any unsolicited support from the Mediterranean NATO powers in our current struggle with the U.S. Chiefs of Staff over command in the Mediterranean'.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> TNA/FO/371/102511/WU11955/72, Commonwealth Relations Office to UK High Commissioner in Canada, 29-May-1952.

<sup>174</sup> TNA/FO/371/102511/WU11955/69, Lord Alexander's Memorandum on the Mediterranean Command, 20-May- 1952.

<sup>175</sup> TNA/FO/371/102510/WU11955/37, Petrie to FO Departments, 7-May-1952. The French considered themselves as no inferior to the British (George-Henri Soutou, 'France and the Cold War, 1944-1963', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 12/4 (35-51, December 2004), pp.35-52; regarding the Italian preference to US preponderance in the Mediterranean, see Alessandro Brogi, *A Question of Self-Esteem: The United*



Faced with a stalemate and fearing that insistence on an inflexible policy might backfire, the British formulated new proposals in May/June 1952. They linked the establishment of a proper command set up for the inclusion of the Greek and Turkish land and air forces with the issue of the allied Mediterranean Command. Thus, Montgomery was the first British official who took the initiative and suggested that the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean should be responsible to SHAPE rather than the Standing Group. He argued that in the event of war the Standing Group was too far away to exercise effective control over the Mediterranean Command.<sup>176</sup> Moreover, he proposed that Italy be incorporated in the central sector and that a new Southern sector be formed, consisting only of Greece and Turkey. Accordingly, CINCSOUTH's Headquarters should be moved from Naples to a more advanced and central position, e.g. in Athens or Izmir (but not Istanbul). In any case, all those proposals suggest that Montgomery clearly considered the command structure in Southern European Command as disastrous; if a war had to be fought under this setup, there would be complete confusion.<sup>177</sup>

The British government and the COS adopted a similar view. They considered that the Southern Command should be comprised only of Italy, while a separate South-eastern (or Aegean) Command comprising Greece and Turkey should be established. In essence, the British believed that since they were prepared to make a concession by placing the British Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean under SACEUR, rather than the Standing Group, they should insist on the establishment of a separate Greek-

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*States and the Cold War Choices in France and Italy, 1944-1958* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2002), p.195. For the Greek and Turkish views, see: TNA/FO/371/102510/WU11955/39, FO to Athens, 10-May-1952; TNA/FO/371/102510/WU11955/40, Athens to FO, 12-May-1952; TNA/FO/371/102510/WU11955/39, Hood (London) to Hoyer-Millar (Paris), 15-May-1952; TNA/FO/371/102511/WU11955/74, Ankara to FO, 24-May-1952.

<sup>176</sup> TNA/FO/371/102520/WU11978/1G, Montgomery to Ridgway and Gruenther, 6-June-1952.

<sup>177</sup> TNA/FO/371/102471/WU11921/5G, Petrie Minute on Montgomery's Report, 9-June-1952.

Turkish Command. Apparently, the ultimate goal was again to link this NATO command more closely to the Middle East, rather than to the European theatre. The Foreign Secretary, Antony Eden, pointed out the importance of the Middle East Defence Organization (the former MEC), because the British 'required this Organization not solely or indeed primarily for military reasons but in order to bring about a stabilization of the Middle East and commit the Americans to taking an active interest in the area'. For his part, Montgomery claimed that 'if a separate Command for Greece and Turkey were set up it should act as an attraction for the Middle Eastern countries to the South, and in fact provide for the military defence of the Middle East'. Eden remarked that this would mean the extension of US hegemony in the Middle East, which, however, 'perhaps is no bad thing'.<sup>178</sup> In addition, Sir Pierson Dixon, Deputy Under-Secretary of State, commented that 'A corollary of the possible eventual extension of the fourth sector to parts of the Levant is that... may be to extend U.S. hegemony to the Middle East. However, one of our principal aims in setting up a joint organization for the defence of the Middle East is to commit the United States permanently to the area'.<sup>179</sup> Moreover, the British believed that if a fourth command was established, it would become 'even more illogical to put Mediterranean Fleet under Carney whose writ would not then run at all in Eastern Mediterranean'.<sup>180</sup>

These positions were part of a larger British view of military balances. In May 1952 the British Cold War strategy was reconsidered by the COS in the Global Strategy Paper. This acknowledged the deterioration of British economic position and called for cutbacks in overseas commitments in regions including the Middle East.

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<sup>178</sup> TNA/FO/371/102520/WU11978/6G, Dixon Minute on Eden-Montgomery discussion on Command Arrangements in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, 17-June-1952.

<sup>179</sup> TNA/FO/371/102520/WU11978/8G, Sir Pierson Dixon, brief for the Secretary of State for Staff, 18-June-1952.

<sup>180</sup> TNA/FO/371/102520/WU11978/10G, De Havilland to General Jacob, 28-June-1952.

However, the region remained vital for British and allied interests, although the COS felt that the Americans were so preoccupied with NATO and the defence of Europe that they excluded other 'equally important strategic areas elsewhere'.<sup>181</sup> There was the hope that the establishment of MEDO would bring stability in the Middle East and compensate for the decline of UK military presence in the region, and that the United States would be fully committed to the defence of the region. Hopefully, the Americans would carry the real burden, while the British would retain as much prestige and world influence as possible.<sup>182</sup> Anthony Eden was an advocate of this policy, which was later described as 'power-by-proxy'.<sup>183</sup> Churchill also believed that it was of utmost importance to 'get America in' the Middle East.<sup>184</sup> However, during the following months it became apparent that the Americans had no actual interest in the military aspect of the Middle Eastern problem, and considered MEDO as 'mainly a political task'. Most importantly, it has been accurately noted that there had been no possibility of a US military contribution to a Middle East defence scheme in the early 1950s.<sup>185</sup>

The British acquiescence to place the Mediterranean Command under SHAPE proved a major concession which a few months later opened the road for a compromise. At that point, had their proposal been accepted, Britain would have been

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<sup>181</sup> John Baylis and Alan Macmillan, 'The British Global Strategy Paper of 1952', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 16:2 (June 1993), pp.200-226; George Peden, *Arms, Economics and British Strategy: From Dreadnoughts to Hydrogen Bombs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.254, 265-6.

<sup>182</sup> TNA/CAB/129/53, C(52)202, Eden Memorandum, 18-June-1952; see also Kevin Ruane, 'SEATO, MEDO, and the Baghdad Pact: Antony Eden, British Foreign Policy and the Collective Defense of Southeast Asia and the Middle East, 1952-1955', *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 16:1 (2005), pp.169-99.

<sup>183</sup> For the 'power-by-proxy', see James Ellison and Kevin Ruane 'Managing the Americans:' Antony Eden, Harold Macmillan and the Pursuit of the 'Power-by-Proxy' in the 1950s', *Contemporary British History* 18: 3 (2004), pp.147-167.

<sup>184</sup> Henry W. Brands, 'The Cairo-Tehran Connection in Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East, 1951-1953', *The International History Review* 11:3 (August 1989), pp.434-56.

<sup>185</sup> Ayesha Jalal, 'Towards the Baghdad Pact: South Asia and Middle East Defence in the Cold War, 1947-1955', *The International History Review* 11:3 (August 1989), pp.409-33.

ready to agree that CINCMED should be directly responsible to SACEUR, on the condition that its commander would be British, that it would include all naval forces in the Mediterranean (including the Sixth Fleet), and that it should have certain responsibilities to the MEC when the latter would be set up. 'This is in fact a most advantageous "package" from our point of view. If we can solve the vexed question of the Mediterranean Naval Command in this context and on these conditions we will have secured our principal strategic requirements without making any vital concessions'.<sup>186</sup> The British thought that this proposal would be attractive to the Americans, because it would give SACEUR authority over the whole Mediterranean. At the same time, the removal of command of all allied naval forces in the region from Admiral Carney would benefit Britain.<sup>187</sup> But this would soon prove not to be the case.

During discussions held at the Standing Group in June 1952, Air Chief Marshal Sir William Elliot claimed that, considering the implications of Greek and Turkish admission to NATO and the consequent command arrangements, emphasis should be placed upon the strategic factors in the Middle East. Indeed, the British did not wish the command set-up envisaged in M.C.38/2 to become permanent. They apparently hoped that a probable establishment of a Middle East defence pact might link Greece and Turkey with such a pact. Of course, the British tried to justify their view not by disclosing their ultimate goal but by stating that an extension of the Southern Flank so far east would cause the creation of an unmanageable command.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> TNA/FO/371/102520/WU11978/7G, COS to Elliot, 18-June-1952; TNA/FO/371/102520/WU11978/8G, Dixon, Brief for the Secretary of State for Staff Conference, 18-June-1952; NATO/S.G.139<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 26-June-1952.

<sup>187</sup> TNA/FO/371/102520/WU11978/16G, Lord Alexander to Churchill, 4-July-1952.

<sup>188</sup> NATO/S.G.139<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 26-June-1952.

However, the US representative at the Standing Group, Vice Admiral Arthur Davis, rebuffed the British suggestion. He said that definite decisions had been reached at Lisbon and the only point remaining to be resolved was that of the allied naval Mediterranean Command. He did not object, together with the French, to asking the new SACEUR General Matthew Ridgway for his comment on the UK proposals. It was possible that favourable consideration might be finally given to the establishment of a South-eastern Command, although both the US and the French military leadership favoured the command set-up envisaged in M.C.38/2. But, on the issue of the allied Mediterranean Command, he stressed that no agreement could be expected on behalf of the JCS to a proposal that the Sixth Fleet be placed under an allied Command; it would remain under CINCSOUTH.<sup>189</sup> The JCS also insisted that the CINCMED ought to be under the command of CINCSOUTH and not under SACUER.<sup>190</sup>

At this point we should clarify another aspect of the presence and command of US naval forces in the Mediterranean. From the very start, the Americans were determined to retain exclusive national control in peacetime over their naval forces in the region. Therefore, the US Sixth Fleet officially formed part of CINCNELM's forces, though at the Lisbon meeting in February 1952 the Americans decided to earmark it for CINCSOUTH in case of war or of NATO manoeuvres in the Mediterranean. From June 1951 until June 1952 the posts of CINCNELM and CINCSOUTH were combined, since Carney held both in his headquarters in Naples.<sup>191</sup> But when Carney's jurisdiction was expanded to include Greece and Turkey in February 1952, he assumed too many responsibilities to be able to exercise all these

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> TNA/FO/371/102520/WU11978/10G, Elliot to Jacob, 27-June-1952.

<sup>191</sup> Robert Jordan, 'U.S. Naval Forces in Europe and NATO', in Simon Duke and Wolfgang Krieger (eds.), *U.S. Military Forces in Europe: The Early Years* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), pp.65-82; Sokolsky, *Seapower*, pp.24-25.

duties effectively. SACEUR Eisenhower in particular was convinced that Carney should keep only his NATO command and pressed to that direction.<sup>192</sup> Indeed, a few months later, in mid-June 1952, Admiral Jerauld Wright became CINCNELM and his headquarters returned to London, while Carney retained his post as CINCSOUTH in Naples and his authority to exercise operational command as required for his mission over the Sixth Fleet.<sup>193</sup>

Finally, the Standing Group recommended that the Military Representatives Committee approve the SACEUR's proposals concerning the command structure of the Southern Flank. However, the COS approved those proposals on the understanding that the propositions constituted only a partial and interim solution to the command problem of the Southern Flank. Therefore, the COS would reserve the right to have the whole question reviewed, in particular when a settlement of Command arrangements in the Mediterranean and the Middle East came in sight. It was recommended that the Military Representatives Committee communicate the above to SACEUR and the Secretary General of NATO.<sup>194</sup>

General Matthew Ridgway, who had been assigned as the new SACEUR, met with General Eisenhower in late May 1952. His main task and concern was primarily military rather than political-diplomatic, as had been the case during Eisenhower's tenure. The new SACEUR had to deal with the command organisation of NATO and US forces in Europe and the build up of NATO's forces. Regarding the southern area, the issues where to fit Greece and Turkey and the relationship of CINCSOUTH (and the US Sixth Fleet) to the British Mediterranean Command, had to

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<sup>192</sup> DDEL/Eisenhower Papers/Pre-Presidential/Principal File, Box 41, Eisenhower to Fechteler, 27-February-1952; also Maloney, *Securing Command*, p.191

<sup>193</sup> Jordan, 'U.S. Naval Forces', pp.65-82.

<sup>194</sup> NATO/DSGM-103-52, Memorandum on Command on the Southern Flank, 8-July-1952.

be addressed.<sup>195</sup> Ridgway did not suggest anything about the Mediterranean Command issue, but proposed the Southern Flank's subdivision in an Italian Land Theatre Command under an Italian officer, and a Greek-Turkish Land Theatre Command under an American. Both these theatres would remain under CINCSOUTH.<sup>196</sup>

As already mentioned, the British tried to justify their proposal for a completely separate Greek-Turkish Command on military grounds. They claimed that CINCSOUTH would not be able to command an area stretching from the Alps to the Caucasus, since Italy and Greece/Turkey were in effect separate theatres of operations. But in early July 1952 the British decided to break their 'package' proposal into two parts: they dropped temporarily their proposals about the Mediterranean Command and focused on the Southern Flank's command structure. Since it did not expect any support from France, Italy, Greece and Turkey, London chose to stop pressing further for the establishment of a fourth command and accepted Ridgway's proposals, as only a partial and interim solution. The British also understood that they should be ready to accept that the Sixth Fleet, and perhaps the Italian fleet, should remain under CINCSOUTH.<sup>197</sup> However, Britain stated that when the Mediterranean and a Middle East Command were set up, some readjustments of the Southern Flank arrangements should take place to ensure the best coordination between these commands.<sup>198</sup> Finally, as the COS recognized that no unified Mediterranean Command solution was in sight, they accepted that the best, though once again 'interim', solution was to retain the two

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<sup>195</sup> Pelletier, George Eugene, 'Ridgway: Trying to Make Good on the Promises', in Jordan (ed.), *Generals in International Politics*, pp.31-52; Ridgway, Matthew, *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p.236.

<sup>196</sup> TNA/FO/371/102520/WU11978/3G, Dixon Memorandum on Command Organisation, 16-June-1952.

<sup>197</sup> TNA/FO/371/102520/WU11978/11G, Petrie Minute on UK Southern Flank proposals, 3-July-1952; TNA/FO/371/102520/WU11978/16G, Lord Alexander to Churchill, 4-July-1952.

<sup>198</sup> NATO/C-R(52)25, 17-October-1952.

existing naval commands (i.e. the British CINCMED and the US CINCNELM) on an equal level and to foster cooperation between them.<sup>199</sup>

At last, in August 1952 it was decided that a separate command entitled 'Allied Land Forces South-Eastern Europe' should be set up to control the Greek and Turkish land forces, because Greece and Turkey were unwilling to place them under an Italian general. This new command was subordinate to CINCSOUTH. The site chosen for this new headquarters, under the US General Willard G. Wyman, was Izmir in Turkey, with an advance post in Salonica, Greece.<sup>200</sup>

Meanwhile, the Turkish government officially protested through its ambassador in London against the British reservation that this command set-up might be temporary. Turkey insisted that the NATO command system and the proposed MEC system were two entirely separate matters. Even when a MEC was established, this would not mean that the NATO south-eastern sub-command and the MEC would be unified. The Turks clearly stated that they regarded the established system as definite and final, since an attempt to transform the Greek-Turkish subcommand into another individual Command would not be in conformity with the Lisbon decisions.<sup>201</sup> They also asked for a British statement that Britain recognized 'that the present agreed arrangements for Turkey's inclusion in the Southern Command should be left undisturbed'. Indeed, the Foreign Office complied with the Turkish demand.<sup>202</sup> Apparently, the Turks were determined to ensure that their terrain and forces would be part of the NATO area and forces, and not of a future Middle Eastern defence scheme.

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<sup>199</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/40, COS(52)395, 28-July-1952.

<sup>200</sup> Stefanidis *Apo ton Emfylion*, pp.87-88; Yeşilbursa, 'Turkey's participation', pp.70-102; Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.25; Lord Hastings Lionel Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years, 1949-1954* (Utrecht: NATO, 1955), p.73.

<sup>201</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/41, COS(52)509, 12-September-1952.

<sup>202</sup> Athanassopoulou, *Turkey*, p.228.



The NATO Headquarters Allied Land Forces Southeastern Europe (HALFSEE), the Land Headquarters of the alliance for Greece and Turkey, was established in Izmir, Turkey, in September 1952. It functioned as an Army Group level headquarters with the mission of exercising operational command of the field armies of Greece and Turkey in the event of war. HALFSEE operated as a major subordinate command to Allied Forces Southern Europe (AFSOUTH) located in Naples, Italy. The staff, exclusive of signal and support elements, consisted of some 100 officers, mostly Greeks, Turks and Americans but also with British, French and Italian representation. The Commander was a US Lieutenant General, while a Greek and a Turkish high-ranking officer (Major Generals according to the organizational tables, but in mid-1950s in fact Brigadier Generals) served as assistants to the Commander. Nevertheless, they were not in the chain of command, since they did not assume command in the absence of the Commander. On the contrary, it seems that they were junior in rank to the Chief of Staff of HALFSEE, a US Brigadier General.<sup>203</sup>

HALFSEE had no direct responsibility for sea and air operations. The Sixth Allied Tactical Air Force (hereafter: SIXATAF), established in Izmir at the same time as HALFSEE and commanded by a US Major General, was charged with coordinating NATO air operations in Greece and Turkey. SIXATAF was not under the command of HALFSEE but operated directly under the command of Air Forces Southern Europe (hereafter: AIRSOUTH) with Headquarters in Naples; and AIRSOUTH was in turn directly under the command of AFSOUTH. Since the NATO Mediterranean naval command structure was independent from AFSOUTH and even more complex, no unity of command existed in the Southern Flank of the alliance. The problem was

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<sup>203</sup> Charles Fergusson, 'Problems of an International Military Headquarters', *Military Affairs* 23/4 (Winter 1959-1960), pp.198-206.

being exacerbated further, because there was no unity of command of the US military forces in the area. The relationship between HALFSEE and the US Military Missions in Greece and Turkey (JUSMAGG and JUSMMAT respectively) was never entirely clear.<sup>204</sup>

Another great problem proved to be the language problem. Although English and French were the official NATO languages, the work at HALFSEE was almost entirely in English. It was supposed that only officers proficient in English were assigned there, but in fact few Greeks, and even fewer Turks, were proficient enough to be effective staff officers. Neither the Greeks, nor the Turks had sufficient number of English speaking officers to meet their increasing requirements. Consequently, most of the workload was assigned to the American and the British officers while their Greek and Turkish colleagues were frustrated, because they were not fully utilized.<sup>205</sup>

Whatever the problems, a more or less satisfactory command structure for the Greek and Turkish land and air forces had been set, but the issue of NATO naval command structure in the Mediterranean required a final settlement. The CINCNELM, Admiral Jerauld Wright, approved, despite its disadvantages, the British concept of the existence of two major naval commands in the Mediterranean. He considered the proposal, 'however much of a compromise', a definite advance, and urged SHAPE to seek the final settlement of the issue.<sup>206</sup> In mid-November 1952 the Chief of the Air Staff, Marshal of the RAF Sir John Slessor, and the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Rhoderick McGrigor, flew to Washington to hold discussions with the JCS and the

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid. JUSMAGG's role was particularly significant, due to its influence on the Greek Armed Forces during the Greek Civil War in 1947-49, and afterwards. In early 1952 thoughts existed that JUSMAGG should come under Carney's operational command and jurisdiction, instead of the Pentagon's, but not to be withdrawn; see TNA/FO/371/101819/WG1193/1, FO Minute on JUSMAGG's future, 10-January-1952.

<sup>205</sup> Fergusson, 'Problems', pp.198-206.

<sup>206</sup> DDEL/Gruenther Papers/NATO-Classified, Box 1, 8-November-1952.

French representative at the Standing Group, Admiral Nomy. The provisional settlement on the establishment of the Mediterranean Command was first reached at the Standing Group meeting in Washington on 20 November. It was agreed that British naval and air bases in the Mediterranean would be placed at the disposal of NATO; that the term 'Mediterranean' should mean 'the entire area of the Mediterranean and Black Seas except for national territorial waters'; that a 'Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean (CINCMED)', directly subordinate and responsible to SACEUR, would be appointed, and that this would be a British naval officer; CINCMED would establish a headquarters ashore with a fully integrated staff consisting of representatives of all the nations concerned; his command would be divided into areas with due regard to national responsibilities and the protocols already in force; recommendations regarding the delineation of areas would be made by SACEUR after consultation with all interested nations; within each area the Commander would be responsible to CINCMED for sea and area operations and CINCMED would establish the closest cooperation with adjacent commanders.<sup>207</sup>

Even so, the British also conceded the US position regarding the Sixth Fleet: the Heavy Carriers, Amphibious or Support Forces of the Sixth Fleet, namely what became known as the Strike Force, should be exclusively under the command of CINCSOUTH and employed only for the support of the land battle in southern Europe, unless specially released by SACEUR to operate elsewhere in the Mediterranean.<sup>208</sup> Churchill himself strongly supported these proposals urging for their quick adoption and pressed the French government to accept them as well. He acknowledged that the

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<sup>207</sup> TNA/PREM/11/45, Lord Alexander to Churchill, 24-November-1952; TNA/WO/216/544, Ministry of Defence to G.P.Q. Middle East Land Forces, COS(ME)753, 28-November-1952; TNA/FO/371/102523/WU11978/ 136G, B.J.S.M. in Washington to Ministry of Defence, 21-November-1952.

<sup>208</sup> NATO/S.G.161<sup>st</sup> Meeting, 24-November-1952.

primary task of this Strike Force was to cooperate with the US Air Forces in the area in the strategic air attack to paralyze Soviet movements; the major strategic air attack had therefore to be under US command.<sup>209</sup> This peculiar position of the Strike Force of the Sixth Fleet became an integral element of the final arrangement and was endorsed by the NATO Military Committee in December 1952: as General Collins noted, the Sixth Fleet was ‘an essential adjunct’ to the command of CINCSOUTH and should remain under him.<sup>210</sup>

Meanwhile, the Turkish leadership intervened and proposed that the naval forces of all the Mediterranean NATO nations operate under a single naval Commander-in-Chief. The Sixth Fleet should also be assigned to this Command, whose commander ought to be called Commander South European Naval Forces, and ‘in view of coordinating all the combat operations and activities in the Southern European area’ it was considered that he should be ‘directly attached to CINCSOUTH’.<sup>211</sup>

Nevertheless, once the Americans and the British had reached a deal (and the French had accepted it), they were able to carry their point. Thus, after two years of intense negotiations, the setting up of the new Mediterranean Command was approved by the NATO Military Committee in December 1952. The new command was to be subordinate to SACEUR, and Allied Forces Mediterranean (AFMED) was officially established on 15 March 1953, with Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten as Commander-in-Chief. The headquarters of CINAFMED (the former CINMED) were established in Malta. Concurrently, the Naval Forces Southern Europe Command under

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<sup>209</sup> TNA/PREM/11/45, COS(S)(52)17<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 28-November-1952.

<sup>210</sup> NATO/M.C.7<sup>th</sup> Session (1<sup>st</sup> Meeting), 11-December-1952.

<sup>211</sup> NATO/MCM-39-52, Memorandum on Command Organisation in the Mediterranean, 11-December-1952.

CINCSOUTH was abolished and a new subordinate command, the Naval Striking and Support Forces, was activated.<sup>212</sup>

Following this, the Mediterranean Command was established quickly. The representatives of Italy, Greece and Turkey were verbally informed of the agreement on the Mediterranean Command on the 24 November.<sup>213</sup> Thus, the Standing Group paper on the Mediterranean Command was approved by the NATO Military Committee, and then by the North Atlantic Council with only minor amendments. Little further negotiation took place, since Italy, Greece and Turkey, as a result of combined US-UK pressure, eventually agreed to approve the paper without reservation. Furthermore, in December 1952 NATO started to prepare the naval force requirements necessary for the new area covered by the Mediterranean Command, while Greece and Turkey, which had maintained their naval forces under their General Staffs, were invited to make available to the Mediterranean Command those of their naval forces not required for operations within their coastal waters.<sup>214</sup>

The December 1952 arrangement over the Mediterranean Command meant that the US view regarding the organization of allied naval forces had prevailed, with the British retaining the post of the Commander-in-Chief. Admittedly, this was small consolation for London, which had hoped to use the Mediterranean Command issue as a strategic lever in its efforts to retain its predominance in the Middle East as well. Even after December 1952 the British kept thinking that the Mediterranean Command

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<sup>212</sup> NATO/M.C.5/6, Report on the Military Progress of NATO, 9-April-1953; TNA/ADM/1/24755, Mountbatten to Secretary of the Admiralty No.PI/Med.64/2, 8-January-1953.

<sup>213</sup> TNA/FO/371/102522/WU11978/78G, B.J.S.M. in Washington to Ministry of Defence, 24-November-1952.

<sup>214</sup> NATO/M.C.5/5, Report on the Military Progress of NATO, 5-December-1952; NATO/M.C.M.-40-52, Memorandum on Greek and Turkish Naval Force Requirements for the Mediterranean Command, 16-December-1952.

was closely linked with London's interests in the Middle East. Of course, British officials admitted that it was difficult for the NATO forces under CINCAFMED to intervene in disturbances in the Middle East outside the NATO area, since several NATO powers were unwilling to interfere in Middle East affairs. Even so, it was argued that CINCAFMED would still be Commander-in-Chief of the British forces under his command and 'in the event of e.g. disturbances in Egypt [he] could employ them but not of course the forces of other NATO powers'. Although some NATO countries might be unhappy if any forces assigned to NATO and under a NATO commander were committed in a crisis which would be no concern of NATO, 'obviously, however, we cannot sterilise the British Mediterranean Fleet to the extent of stating that it would only be employed under the aegis of NATO'.<sup>215</sup> This, however, meant that London's aims with regard to the Mediterranean Command had not been met in full.

The above had to do with the political dimension of the establishment of the Mediterranean Command and the overall command structure of allied naval forces in the region. As for the military situation and NATO's naval strategy, the task of the Striking Forces was to provide direct support to the land and air campaigns in the Southern Flank area with maritime aviation and amphibious forces. A key role of those forces was to launch tactical and even strategic nuclear strikes, acting as an extension of the strategic air force. The condition and effectiveness of the allied ground and air units in the southern flank was poor, and therefore the Sixth Fleet had to provide as much support as possible.<sup>216</sup> Admiral Carney stated on 22 April 1952 that considering all elements of his command, the maritime situation was relatively good, or, as he put

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<sup>215</sup> TNA/FO/371/102522/WU11978/846, Hoyer-Millar to Brigadier Ewbank, 12-December-1952.

<sup>216</sup> Sokolsky, *Seapower*, p.30.

it, the Mediterranean naval forces ‘were less badly off’ than forces elsewhere. He was also very emphatic when he discussed maritime airpower, defending the role of aircraft carriers (which some critics had described as ‘sitting ducks’) and making clear he had asked from SACEUR for as many carriers as he could get. Furthermore, referring to NATO’s Southern Command as a whole, Carney stressed that his command ‘was desperately short of land-based airpower, the tactical types’.<sup>217</sup>

In any case, in the early 1950s the newly designated US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean was considered the most powerful force under SACUER’s command, not only due to its powerful maritime air arm, but also to its considerable amphibious-counterassault capabilities.<sup>218</sup> At that point it included two carriers, three cruisers, two destroyer squadrons and various supporting elements.<sup>219</sup> And, although in decline, the British naval presence – including a battleship and two light carriers – in the Mediterranean was still significant.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> HAGFM/1952/File69/1[2], Athanassios Politis to Greek Foreign Ministry, No.1708, 22-April-1952.

<sup>218</sup> Leslie Rose, *Power at Sea*, v.3: *A Violent Peace, 1945-2000* (Columbia & London: Missouri University Press, 2007), pp.64-66.

<sup>219</sup> Sokolsky, *Seapower*, p.25.

<sup>220</sup> Rose, *Power*, pp.65.

**ii) *Regional defence: The issue of military cooperation with Yugoslavia, NATO planning for the Balkan frontier, and the conclusion of the Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav Pact of Friendship***

By early 1952, negotiations had been in progress between Greece and Turkey in an attempt to coordinate their defence plans, while during the spring of 1952 Greek-Yugoslav military talks were held.<sup>221</sup> The first who had toyed with, and soon advocated, the idea of a tripartite alliance was the Greek military as early as 1949.<sup>222</sup> By 1952 even the Italians, who were still at odds with the Yugoslavs over Trieste, acknowledged that the integration of Yugoslavia with the Western defence system was a matter of great importance and interest to NATO, and Italy in particular. Rome wanted to know whether the defence plans of Yugoslavia had been taken into account by the Standing Group in the establishment of NATO operational plans, especially with regard to the exposed Ljubljana Gap. Moreover, in August 1952 Greece and Turkey were asked to keep the NAC informed about the progress of the Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav negotiations and their results. The Greek and Turkish representatives, Panagiotis Pipinelis and Taha Carim respectively, replied that they were at the disposal of the Council.<sup>223</sup>

Soon afterwards Pipinelis pointed out (with Carim's concurrence) that for a considerable time, long before Greece and Turkey joined NATO, the two governments had been trying to improve their relations with Yugoslavia and to bring that country into the orbit of their own defence efforts. He then analyzed the reasons why Greece

<sup>221</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.36; see for more, John Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle: birth and decline of an alliance across ideological boundaries* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968).

<sup>222</sup> David Stone, 'The Balkan Pact and American Policy', *East European Quarterly* 28:3 (September 1994), pp.393-408.

<sup>223</sup> NATO/C-R(52)18, 23-August-1952; NATO/C-R(52)27, 31-October-1952.



considered cooperation with Yugoslavia of great importance. Those were political and military, local, regional, and European. Locally, concerning the defence of Greece, the improvement of relations with Belgrade and, if possible, Greek-Yugoslav military cooperation, was vital. Not only was the Greek northern frontier too long and very difficult to be held against Soviet-bloc aggression, but also the Greek-Yugoslav frontier (contrary to the Greek-Bulgarian and Greek-Albanian ones) was not mountainous; from there the Greek positions of defence along the whole northern Greece could be easily outflanked by advancing enemy motorized forces.<sup>224</sup>

Pipinelis assessed that Yugoslavia constituted a significant bastion for the defence of the Straits, the Near East and the Adriatic. No attack based on Bulgaria and directed southwards could be mounted so long as the Yugoslavs could threaten its flank, while Yugoslavia also represented a threat against any attack directed towards Italy.<sup>225</sup> Pipinelis also emphasized the importance of Yugoslavia, within the wider southern 'fortress' consisting of Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey, for European defence. He also referred to the political importance and the broader implications of the Titoist heresy in its breach with communist orthodoxy.<sup>226</sup>

At this point it should be mentioned that in April 1952 the newly-appointed Yugoslav military attaché in Athens declared to General Grigoropoulos that, in the event of military threat against Greece from the Eastern bloc, the Greeks could expect the Greek-Yugoslav frontier to be covered by the Yugoslav forces, because the Yugoslavs were determined to defend their country. The Greek Chief of the General Staff of National Defence responded that he was happy to hear this, but believed that

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<sup>224</sup> NATO/C-R(52)19, 5-September-1952.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

bilateral (or even tripartite, with Turkey's participation) military discussions should take place to establish common plans or at least useful exchange of views.<sup>227</sup>

In any case, despite the consistent efforts made by the Greek Government, progress in the Greek-Yugoslav and tripartite Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav talks had not gone much beyond generalities, for various reasons. The Yugoslavs appeared very hesitant to initiate formal military discussions, and informed the Greeks and the Turks that the first step for the initiation of military talks should be made by the Greek or/and Turkish side. Apparently, Tito was not in a position to start military talks with the two pro-Western neighbouring states. Although Athens and Ankara were ready to assume the initiative, it was definitely not easy for the three parties to proceed fast with the commencement of military negotiations.

There were two primary reasons for Tito's hesitation. The first was the ideological and political gap between Yugoslavia on the one hand, and Greece and Turkey on the other. The second was the Greek-Yugoslav distrust, going back to the Greek Civil War, which could not be easily overcome. Greek suspiciousness was further fuelled because Tito and his regime, and especially circles in the province of Yugoslav Macedonia, had, in the second half of the 1940s claimed Greek Macedonia, while even after 1948 they continually raised the issue of an alleged existence of a Slav-speaking minority in Northern Greece. Thus, the Yugoslav indirect claims in Greek Macedonia, though not to the same extent as during the 1946-8 period, had not ceased. However, despite continuous Greek suspicion towards the Yugoslavs, Athens believed that Tito and his federal government would never allow the local authorities

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<sup>227</sup> HAGFM/1952/File25/7, Note of Undersecretary of State Averoff, 28-April-1952.

in Skopje to provoke the Greeks to such an extent as to cause a failure of a bilateral (and probably tripartite) rapprochement.<sup>228</sup>

In any case, the most serious problem posed by a tripartite defence pact was the extent of the obligations that Greece and Turkey should undertake towards Yugoslavia. The fact that Greece and Turkey were NATO members complicated things, since a Greek-Turkish commitment to provide automatically help to Belgrade in the event of war with the Eastern bloc would indirectly expand NATO obligations to Yugoslavia. This would not be a problem in the case of Bulgarian and Soviet aggression in the Balkans, or of a general conflict in Europe and the Near East. However, an automatic Greek-Turkish guarantee could entangle Athens and Ankara, and probably NATO, in a localized conflict between Yugoslavia and a Soviet satellite other than Bulgaria (probably Hungary), or even a Soviet attempt to overthrow Tito. Last but not least, Greece and Turkey did not seek to form a tripartite alliance which would include an automatic guarantee against any aggressor, because this would frustrate the Italians as long as the Trieste question remained unsolved.<sup>229</sup>

Athens and Turkey wanted a tripartite defence pact aiming at Bulgarian aggression which would also associate Yugoslavia with NATO's Southern Flank. Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia had reasons to fear Bulgaria: due to its geographical position it could threaten all three countries; moreover, it was the most reliable Soviet ally and had the better equipped, and probably the better trained army in the region.<sup>230</sup> The Yugoslavs, for their part, were particularly interested by the summer of 1952 in engaging in military talks provided that Turkey was prepared to participate in the

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<sup>228</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.37.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Stone, 'The Balkan Pact', pp.393-408.

‘positive defence’ of Thrace, something that both Turkey and Greece were fully aware of, and in broad agreement.<sup>231</sup>

How did NATO and its most significant members view a potential Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav military agreement? In early 1952, Greece and Turkey requested Washington to press Yugoslavia to commit itself to mutual defence. However, the US Acting Secretary of State, James Webb, refused to intervene. The Americans were unwilling to push for Yugoslav military cooperation with the Greece and Turkey, and preferred that the Greeks and Turks lay through their own means the groundwork for staff discussions. On the one hand, the United States did not want to discourage any Greek and Turkish efforts to establish closer relations and develop greater cooperation with Yugoslavia. On the other hand, the Americans were unwilling to participate themselves in staff conversations with the Yugoslavs. In addition, the fact that the Greeks and the Turks lacked knowledge of NATO military planning would probably limit the usefulness of any tripartite staff discussions at that stage.<sup>232</sup>

Meanwhile, as Belgrade asked for western military aid in 1952, the three Standing Group powers were ready to initiate contingent planning discussions with Yugoslavia in autumn 1952. The Americans proposed to the British and the French that Italy, Greece, and Turkey should be assured that they would be kept informed insofar as matters directly concerning their national interests were involved.<sup>233</sup> However, on the insistence of the Defense Department and the JCS the Italians, the Greeks and the Turks would not participate in the talks.<sup>234</sup> The British believed that, though welcomed, the Greek-Yugoslav-Turkish discussions should keep in step with

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<sup>231</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VII, p.896; TNA/DEFE/5/40, COS(52)429, 11-August-1952.

<sup>232</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, p.591.

<sup>233</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/42, COS(52)531, 24-September-1952.

<sup>234</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, p.1307.

‘the more important’ US-UK-French discussions which General Handy was to conduct shortly with the Yugoslavs. Those talks would aim to explore ways of filling the gap in Western defences in general. Although the idea of a common defence plan between Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey would be surely discussed, this would not constitute the central theme of those talks.<sup>235</sup> The reason for the exclusion of Greece and Turkey (as well as Italy) from the military talks with the Yugoslavs, at least in the initial phase, was that the participation by those countries would probably render it more difficult to lay a favourable groundwork for the military cooperation of the West and Yugoslavia. Particularly, it would give a NATO colour to the allied approach; this might jeopardize the success of the whole effort, given Belgrade’s aversion to any formal military alliance with the West at that time.<sup>236</sup>

Moreover, Rome was not enthusiastic about the prospect of military contacts between Yugoslavia and the West. The Italians claimed that military cooperation should be first and foremost based on mutual trust and common faith, which was not the case in Italian-Yugoslav relations at that point. As regards the Balkans, a military agreement alone, without the establishment of a political agreement as well, would not be enough for the strengthening of the area. Therefore, Italy remained adamant that as long as the Yugoslavs were unwilling to seek an accommodation of the controversy over Trieste, any coordination of efforts between Yugoslavia and NATO, irrespectively of the formal aspects that such cooperation could take, would prove

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<sup>235</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/42, COS(52)597, 3-November-1952.

<sup>236</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, p.1307.

impossible. Under the existing circumstances, such coordination would definitely meet the firm opposition of the Italians.<sup>237</sup>

The Italian military even stressed the danger of overestimating the Yugoslav sector as a consistent and firm defence line between NATO forces of Central Europe and those of Greece. They believed that if Yugoslavia were attacked it would probably establish a defence position in the south-west mountainous area instead of defending the access to Italy and Greece, i.e. the Ljubljana Gap and upper Vardar (Axios) Valley respectively; if not attacked, Yugoslavia would probably only secure its borders, but remain, at least initially, a neutral observer, without pinning down any Soviet bloc forces.<sup>238</sup>

Then, in December 1952, the Italian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Alcide De Gasperi, raised in the NAC ministerial meeting the Trieste problem and its continuing impact on Italian-Yugoslav relations as well as on the issue of common defence. He also noted that Italy had supported the supply of aid to Yugoslavia in 1951-52 and had missed no opportunity to relieve tension with Yugoslavia; conversely, he claimed, Belgrade did not make any gesture of goodwill towards Italy for the improvement of bilateral relations and collaboration in common defence. Consequently, circumstances hindered the possibility of Italo-Yugoslav cooperation. The Greek Defence Minister, Panagiotis Kanellopoulos, and the Turkish Foreign Minister, Fuat Köprülü, underlined the strategic importance of Yugoslavia for the defence of south-eastern Europe. However, they recognized that the establishment of a

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<sup>237</sup> NATO/C-M(52)131, Italian statement concerning M.C.14/1(Final), 12-December-1952; NATO/C-R(52)39, 17-December-1952.

<sup>238</sup> NATO/SGM-2109-52, Memorandum on Yugoslavia's position in case of an East/West conflict, and her capabilities in 1952, 12-September-1952.

Greek-Yugoslav-Turkish frontier would not occur at the expense of Rome's 'legitimate interests'.<sup>239</sup>

Until late 1952, Tito had been interested only in an informal tripartite Balkan understanding to enhance Yugoslavia's defence position in the Balkans in the face of the threat of Soviet aggression but also as a response to 'the eventual return of Italy into the Balkans'.<sup>240</sup> However, in December 1952 the Yugoslavs adopted a new policy and publicly declared their willingness to reach a formal accord with Greece and Turkey. This was due to fears that the Italians, who were about to launch their own 'diplomatic offensive', might convince the Greeks and the Turks to slow down their rapprochement with Belgrade (in 1952-3, Italian-Yugoslav relations remained tense due to the Trieste question).<sup>241</sup> In addition, in November 1952 the US-UK-French delegation under the US General Thomas Handy (the 'Handy mission') arrived in Belgrade to negotiate with the Yugoslav leaders the prospects of military aid to Yugoslavia and hold talks on the possibility of military cooperation. However, those discussions were considered as preliminary by the Standing Group powers, while the Yugoslavs were impatient for the conclusion of an agreement. At Belgrade's dismay, no definite security arrangements could be established between the West and Yugoslavia. Therefore, the Yugoslavs made plain that they would not release any information on their defence plans, unless the Standing Group powers would be prepared to enter in more concrete talks.<sup>242</sup> Soon afterwards, the Yugoslav leader

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<sup>239</sup> NATO/C-R(52)39, 17-December-1952.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid, p.1329; also *New York Times*, 2-September-1952.

<sup>241</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, pp.96-97.

<sup>242</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-1954, VIII, pp.1335-6; also Beatrice Heuser, *Western 'Containment' Policies in the Cold War: the Yugoslav Case, 1948-53* (London, New York: Routledge, 1989) pp.170-1.

turned to Greece and Turkey and initiated talks with them in early 1953 about joint defence of the Balkans.<sup>243</sup>

After a period of hesitation, in late 1952 – early 1953 the US and UK governments encouraged the conclusion of some form of Greek-Yugoslav-Turkish agreement to cooperate in the event of Soviet aggression.<sup>244</sup> In late 1952 Acheson, who was about to leave his post, claimed that Washington should encourage rapid and concrete progress in military planning in Greek-Yugoslav and Turkish-Yugoslav military talks. This was conditional on the Greeks and the Turks bearing the limitations imposed upon them by their membership of NATO and their not undertaking too many obligations towards Yugoslavia. Moreover, Acheson did not favour any commitment of forces, at least at that stage.<sup>245</sup> Therefore, US diplomats served as channels of communication between the three Balkan states and offered their diplomatic intelligence to give a crucial push towards the establishment of a political pact. Nevertheless, the US and UK actions were of secondary importance. The initiative definitely lay in the three Balkan states.<sup>246</sup> As the US Ambassador in Turkey George McGhee emphasised, ‘with little advice or encouragement from the Western powers, [the] three countries have on their own made commendable progress in worthwhile project’.<sup>247</sup>

In December 1952 Greek-Yugoslav military talks took place in Athens. They included intelligence information exchange and a detailed, though still general, discussion on defence problems of common interest. Furthermore, the psychological

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<sup>243</sup> Winfried Heinemann, ‘The West and Yugoslavia in the 1950s’, *Third Annual Military History Working Group Seminar on ‘NATO and the Warsaw Pact – The Formative Years 1948-1968’* (Prague, 2006), pp.1-19.

<sup>244</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, p.95.

<sup>245</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, pp.598-600.

<sup>246</sup> Stone, ‘The Balkan Pact’, p.393-408.

<sup>247</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, p.617.



purpose of the visit should not be overlooked: the aim was to demonstrate to both the Greeks and the Yugoslavs that the ideological gap and recent enmity between the two states could be overcome and that political and military cooperation was feasible.<sup>248</sup> During the same month further Greek-Yugoslav and Turkish-Yugoslav military talks took place in Belgrade.<sup>249</sup> The three governments, through bilateral – not yet tripartite – negotiations, had achieved to reach the general outline of a mutual entente.<sup>250</sup> So long as this remained an entente, and not a formal alliance which would complicate NATO planning, Washington, London and Paris supported the tripartite Balkan rapprochement.

However, until that point, Greece had been very anxious and reluctant to proceed quickly to the conclusion of a formal pact with Yugoslavia so long as the Italian-Yugoslav dispute over the Trieste question was continuing, since Athens was also seeking to revive its relations with Italy. During his visit to Athens in mid-January 1953 the Italian Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi publicly said that Italy would favour ‘any defensive agreement which, within the framework of NATO, might increase the effectiveness of the free world to preserve peace’.<sup>251</sup> This could be considered as a green or at least amber light, and when Athens soon agreed on tripartite negotiations, the Greek Foreign Minister Stefanos Stephanopoulos stressed that ‘in particular, our [tripartite] entente should not frighten Italy’.<sup>252</sup> In fact, the deadlock was broken by Turkish initiatives: in late January 1953 Köprülü visited Belgrade and Athens and proposed that the issue of the formal alliance and of

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<sup>248</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, pp.73-74.

<sup>249</sup> Heuser, *Western ‘Containment’ Policies*, p.182.

<sup>250</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, p.98.

<sup>251</sup> *The Times*, 11-January-1953.

<sup>252</sup> APA/File/28\_1953, Greek Foreign Ministry to Ankara, Belgrade, Rome, Washington, Paris, London, Greek Delegation to NATO, 14-February-1953.

automatic guarantee should be evaded for the moment by the conclusion of a treaty of friendship, instead of one of alliance. Greece and Turkey hoped that Yugoslavia might even join NATO in the future, and therefore the issue of the automatic guarantee would be resolved.<sup>253</sup> For his part, Tito admitted that a regional tripartite agreement should be in conformity with Greek and Turkish obligations to NATO and that this was a very delicate issue which should be handled properly by Athens and Ankara.<sup>254</sup>

When Köprülü visited Athens, Admiral Carney, CINCAIRSOUTH Schlatter, and COMLANDSOUTHEAST Wyman, also visited the Greek capital. Carney insisted that the visit of the NATO commanders was ‘purely coincidental’ with Köprülü’s, but admitted that he was kept informed of Greek-Yugoslav military talks. The following day CINCAFMED Admiral Lord Mountbatten also paid an unexpected visit in Athens to hold talks with the Greek leadership and the other NATO commanders. In absence of archival sources, an accurate hypothesis on a possible role played by NATO commanders for the rapprochement of Yugoslavia with Greece and Turkey cannot be made.<sup>255</sup>

Surely, the Americans viewed positively the proposed form of tripartite collaboration. The establishment of a strong, anti-Soviet security system in all parts of the world – including the Balkans – was one of the primary goals of US policy. The conclusion of a Treaty of Friendship would bypass many difficulties that might otherwise arise if Greece and Turkey extended any specific commitments to Yugoslavia. The Turkish formula seemed well calculated to encourage tripartite military planning in the near future. It contributed to the defence of the southern

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<sup>253</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.38.

<sup>254</sup> APA/File/28\_1953, Greek Foreign Ministry to Ankara, Belgrade, Rome, Washington, Paris, London, Greek Delegation to NATO, 14-February-1953.

<sup>255</sup> *The Times*, 27, 28 & 29-January-1953.

Balkans without at the same time expanding the obligations of the other NATO members. Therefore, provided that the eventual form of a Balkan accord would not involve extra commitments, the State Department did not consider that the submission of the treaty to NATO bodies was necessary (although it was assumed, and regarded desirable, that Athens and Ankara would inform the NAC). Another very welcome development was the declared willingness of the three countries to leave the door open to Italian adherence at a later stage, should Rome be interested. Of course, the possibility of eventual Yugoslav admission to NATO was a different issue, and if raised would be a matter for the accord of all NATO members.<sup>256</sup>

The US Ambassadors in Athens and Ankara, John Emil Peurifoy and George McGhee respectively, were in favour of a quick conclusion of a Balkan Pact (as was their colleague in Belgrade, George Allen). They doubted whether it was realistic to believe that the military staff talks would not tend to create implicit obligations among the three parties, since obviously the next step was to plan for joint operations in case of war. If the United States, Britain and France would attempt to stop that evolution, their policy would probably backfire. Tito's suspicion, evident during the Handy talks, that the West would not assist him in a future war, would be revived. Furthermore, the Greeks and the Turks would feel that their goal for a regional defence pact would have been 'reduced to an empty gesture along lines of ineffective Balkan entente'. Both countries, 'relatively isolated from Western Europe and with less possibility for receiving assistance in the event of war, might find difficult to understand resistance

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<sup>256</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, p.615.

by their NATO allies to a step they consider desirable from general NATO viewpoint and vital to their own security'.<sup>257</sup>

On the contrary, it was argued that should Yugoslavia be attacked by the Soviet bloc (including Bulgaria), it would be in the interest of effective NATO and US defence that Greece and Turkey come to Belgrade's help. Not only this seemed to be the only option for successful Balkan defence, but it was acknowledged that it would be highly unlikely that the West would treat an attack against Yugoslavia as an isolated war, just like another Korea (in contrast to the view expressed by General Handy during his talks with the Yugoslavs in November 1952, which had disappointed the latter). Therefore, it would be preferable to demonstrate clearly western resolve to react to Soviet-bloc aggression against Yugoslavia and deter the Soviets (rather than actually defend Yugoslavia in case of war). Moreover, the NATO military authorities could benefit from conversations to associate Belgrade with NATO strategic planning. NATO, or at least US military officers should maintain very close liaison with the Greek and Turkish negotiators to coordinate tripartite planning with NATO plans and ensure that the Greeks and the Turks would not go 'farther than they intend' and infringe their NATO obligations.<sup>258</sup>

However, the State Department remained reserved. The new Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, emphasised that he preferred that Greece and Turkey would only commit to consult on common contingency measures with Yugoslavia. It was not advisable for the time being to extend commitments to lend assistance in wartime, especially through an 'automatic' guarantee, which would create 'a serious problem for all NATO members'. Nevertheless, Western reservations on the actual form of

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid, pp.618, 622.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid, pp.617-8, 622-3.

the treaty did not mean disapproval of the tripartite political and military collaboration itself.<sup>259</sup> If the guarantee was automatic, it would entail the expansion of the NATO guarantee to Yugoslavia. But if in that case some European allies (most likely the Scandinavians or the Dutch) declared that they did not recognise the 'new' obligations that NATO was indirectly assuming towards Tito, this would cause the serious weakening of NATO as a whole.

Meanwhile, on 20 February the Chief of the US Army Staff, General Lawton Collins, urged, on behalf of the JCS, that no time should be lost in preparing for further military discussions between the Standing Group representatives and the Yugoslavs. The US, UK and French representatives should make recommendations on future courses of actions and submit those proposals to their respective governments for approval. The British officials concurred.<sup>260</sup> Obviously, the Americans and the British wished to regain the initiative and shape future developments in the region irrespective of possible progress towards a Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav accord, because Balkan developments could create problems to NATO.

Indeed, on 17-20 February 1953, military talks between high-ranking officers of the Greek, Turkish and Yugoslav General Staffs were held in Ankara. The Yugoslavs tried to achieve the provision of some kind of automatic guarantee, but this was rejected by both the Greeks and the Turks. However, this did not prevent the three countries from reaching an accommodation during tripartite talks in Athens, leading to the conclusion of the Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav Pact of Friendship and Collaboration. This was formally signed in Ankara on 28 February by the Foreign Ministers of the three states, Stephanopoulos, Köprülü, and Popović. Although the three signatories

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid, pp.624-5.

<sup>260</sup> TNA/FO/371/WY1076/37, FO to Washington, 24-February-1953; *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, p.1341.

declared their determination to defend their independence and territorial integrity and to step up their efforts to make common defence more effective, for the time being the Pact of Ankara was an entente, not an alliance. But even so, the Pact's conclusion, and the prospect of future military cooperation directly influenced the regional correlation of forces; particularly, since the Pact of Ankara was implicitly directed against the common regional enemy, Bulgaria. In any case, it was apparent that the conclusion of a formal tripartite military alliance would be the next logical step.<sup>261</sup>

The US policy makers preferred that any future contingent Yugoslav-Greek-Turkish military planning should be cleared with NATO military authorities, as being consonant with NATO military planning. Furthermore, it was apparent that State Department officials considered that the heart of the problem of Yugoslavia's relations with the West was the Trieste issue. The continuing Italian-Yugoslav dispute hampered any effort for the coordination of NATO-Yugoslav planning for joint defence of the Ljubljana Gap.<sup>262</sup> In any case, for many US (and other NATO) policy makers, the tripartite Balkan cooperation was a positive step. When Dulles met in late April the Greek Defence Minister Panagiotis Kanellopoulos during the NAC Ministerial Meeting, he expressed his great satisfaction with the conclusion of the Ankara Treaty. He then recommended the continuation of Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav military discussions.<sup>263</sup>

Meanwhile, in February 1953 Popović claimed that a renewal of the talks between Belgrade and the United States, Britain and France on a military basis was

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<sup>261</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, pp.103-104; Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.38; Stone, 'The Balkan Pact', pp.393-408.

<sup>262</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, pp.1340, 1345.

<sup>263</sup> DDEL/Gruenther Papers/NATO Series/Chief-of-Staff, Box 2, 27-April-1953; APA/File 29/1953, Greek Foreign Ministry to Washington, 25-April-1953.

desirable and should precede any political agreement. This development complicated matters. It was difficult to hold useful military discussions without disclosing and discussing NATO plans for the region. But this was SACUER's responsibility and could not be done on a tripartite (US-UK-French) basis. However, disclosure of NATO plans required the approval of the member countries of the alliance, and some of these (particularly Italy) might not agree. The COS argued that disclosure of NATO plans would not contribute in a positive way to the military talks with the Yugoslavs, because NATO's actual inability to defend the Ljubljana Gap would be revealed.<sup>264</sup> Therefore, it seems that initially the British military were not as eager as the JCS (or at least Collins) to resume US-UK-French-Yugoslav military talks. This did not affect UK-Yugoslav political relations and in March 1953 Tito officially visited London to hold discussions with the British leadership. The latter endorsed the signature of the Balkan Treaty and the progress made on tripartite military cooperation, but laid great emphasis on the need for the normalization of Italian-Yugoslav relations.<sup>265</sup>

The importance of Yugoslavia's formal, or at least informal, association with NATO's military planning in the Balkans was deemed necessary to the Greeks in particular, but to the Turks as well, for the defence of their common frontier in Thrace, and Greek eastern Macedonia.<sup>266</sup> The main reason was that in the 1950s Greece and Turkey did not have the potential to repel a probable invasion against the above regions, to the direction of the Aegean Sea and the Straits, while geography did not help as well. And, most importantly, NATO itself could not do much either by direct

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<sup>264</sup> TNA/DEFE/4/60, COS(53)23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, 16-February-1953; TNA/DEFE/5/45, COS(53)118, 24-February-1953

<sup>265</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, pp.1346-7; also Sir Anthony Eden, *Full Circle* (London: Cassel, 1960), p.182.

<sup>266</sup> Field-Marshal Alexandros Papagos - the major Greek military figure in early Cold War period and Prime Minister from late 1952 until October 1955 - attributed great significance to the Yugoslav factor and strongly favoured Yugoslavia's link with NATO's Balkan defence system. See TNA/FO/371/101821/WG1196/1, Athens to FO, 17-June-1952.

intervention or by supplying its new members with such war materiel and financial aid to enable them to strengthen adequately their defence capabilities.<sup>267</sup>

Indeed, the sole senior NATO official who attributed great significance to the defence of Thrace and the Straits was the deputy SACEUR, Field Marshal Montgomery. In May and September 1952, during his two visits in Turkey and Greece, he stressed that in case of a general East-West war in Europe and the Near East, loss of the Straits, and especially of the plateau of central Turkey, would prove crucial. He also advised the Turks to move forward their main forces closer to their north-eastern (Asiatic) frontier, and suggested that the measure could possibly be applied to the north-western (European) frontier as well. Indeed, especially during his first visit in May, Montgomery claimed that ‘Thrace could and should be held’ and that ‘not an inch of Turkish or Greek territory should be given up without the fiercest resistance’. These views had a most heartening effect on the Turkish political and military leadership<sup>268</sup>. Montgomery’s public insistence that the whole of Turkish territory should be fought for, his eagerness on helping the Turks deal with the practical issues of their integration into SHAPE, and, particularly, his refraining from raising the issues of the Mediterranean and Middle East Commands had one single aim: to remove doubts about the sincerity of British support for Turkey’s inclusion into the European Command and eliminate ‘the poison’ which remained from 1951 – early 1952, when Britain appeared to be blocking Turkey’s inclusion in NATO.<sup>269</sup> According to the

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<sup>267</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/41, COS(52)511, 18-September-1952; also Iatrides, ‘Failed Rampart’, pp.58-74.

<sup>268</sup> TNA/FO/371/102471/WU11921/2G, Ankara to FO, 15-May-1952.

<sup>269</sup> TNA/FO/371/102471/WU11921/3G, Helm to Eden, 26-May-1952.



British embassy in Ankara, Montgomery's views and behaviour did 'a lot to put us back on the map in Turkey and to dispel the harm which was done last year'.<sup>270</sup>

In June 1952 Köprülü argued that a NATO decision to defend Thrace would give Yugoslavia sufficient confidence to proceed with military cooperation with Greece and Turkey. On the contrary, if the Soviets could advance and break through to the Aegean within a few days, the moral effect not only on Greece but on the whole Eastern Mediterranean area would be disastrous; the strategic consequences would obviously be significant. But if NATO opted to defend Thrace, this would constitute a decisive deterrent against possible Soviet aggression. Furthermore, once Turkey's western front had been secured, the Turks would be able to play their full part in Middle East defence.<sup>271</sup>

Montgomery recommended to the Greeks as well to move their main forces forward to Eastern Macedonia. However, he admitted that under the given circumstances, Western (Greek) Thrace could not be defended, although its probable loss would not matter much to the outcome of a conflict.<sup>272</sup> Of course, this remark could not soothe Greek insecurity. After all, loss of Western Thrace would entail that the physical contact of Greek and Turkish land forces would be broken, thus seriously affecting Turkish position in Eastern Thrace.

Here lay the reasons of Montgomery's pessimism. According to the British COS, in the event of conflict in 1952 the Soviet bloc was likely to deploy simultaneously 16 divisions and 900 aircraft against Turkish Thrace and 10 divisions and 450 aircrafts against the Greek territories of Western Thrace and Eastern

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<sup>270</sup> TNA/FO/371/101863/WK1072/4, Ankara to FO, 20-October-1952.

<sup>271</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/40, COS(52)429, 11-August-1952.

<sup>272</sup> HAGFM/1952/File186/4[2], Kontoumas to Greek Foreign Ministry, 27-September-1952.

Macedonia; possibly one-third of these divisions would be armoured or mechanized and the aircraft were estimated to be modern jets. Although the total strength of the Greek and the Turkish Armed Forces were 12 divisions and 120 aircraft, and 21 divisions and 350 aircrafts respectively, the armies of both countries were ill-equipped and greatly inferior in firepower and mobility to the Soviet-bloc divisions, while their weak air forces possessed only obsolete piston-engine aircrafts. Therefore, the Greek and Turkish forces would be no match to the Soviet-bloc ones.<sup>273</sup> For their part, the Greeks estimated that the Soviet-bloc forces in the Balkans (Albanian, Bulgarian, Romanian and Hungarian) were roughly equal in numerical strength with the Greek, Yugoslav, and Turkish forces. However, they also declared that the Soviet-bloc forces enjoyed considerable supremacy in artillery, armour, and tactical air force, and they would also have the advantage of initiative.<sup>274</sup>

Even more disheartening was the fact that, in essence, NATO and allied support in general would be very limited, if it ever could come at all. As other NATO land and air forces would be fully committed elsewhere, some help could only be provided from CINCSOUTH's Fast Carrier Task Forces. However, these forces would be heavily committed to the fighting in northern Italy and they could grant limited support to the NATO's Balkan front.<sup>275</sup> Meanwhile, the Turks, and especially the Greeks, had greatly and unrealistically overestimated the capabilities of those NATO forces available for the defence of the area.<sup>276</sup> Yugoslavia might be able to defend effectively the Vardar Valley, or more possibly, the Monastir Gap deeper south-west, thus freeing some Greek forces for Thrace's defence. At any rate, according to the

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<sup>273</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/41, COS(52)511, 18-September-1952.

<sup>274</sup> TNA/FO/371/101821/WG1196/1, Athens to FO, 17-June-1952.

<sup>275</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/41, COS(52)511, 18-September-1952.

<sup>276</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/42, COS(52)590, 29-October-1952.

COS, 'even with air parity, any attempt to hold Thrace would involve the major part of the Greek and Turkish armies. With the overwhelming superiority in armour that the Russians are likely to possess added to their probable superiority in the air we do not consider a successful defence of Thrace to be practicable. Any serious attempt by the Greeks and Turks to defend Thrace in the foreseeable future could only result in a military disaster. In addition, it is likely that any defence of the Middle East would be gravely jeopardized'.<sup>277</sup> Obviously, by mid-1952 the COS and Montgomery had somewhat divergent views over the issue of the defence of Eastern Thrace, since the latter regarded the British approach as 'out of date and under the new conditions ill-conceived'.<sup>278</sup>

The Americans also reacted to Montgomery's proposals, since SHAPE could not offer any additional naval and air assistance to Turkey (and Greece) because the US forces in Europe were overstretched. Moreover, McGhee made plain that additional equipment to the Turkish Army could obviously not be given by the US Mutual Defence Aid Programme (MDAP) which had already been fixed for 1952 (the contrary was probable, a reduction might occur due to cuts by US Congress). Furthermore, there were not any additional ground troops available to strengthen the defence of Eastern Thrace, unless Turkey was going to weaken its position on its Eastern frontier, which was not desirable either to the Americans or the British.<sup>279</sup>

In fact, there had been a verbal amendment on S.G.13/24 – the draft document on NATO's new strategic guidance, prepared by the Standing Group – which emphasized more the defence of Thrace. But this amendment was inserted clearly

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<sup>277</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/41, COS(52)511, 18-September-1952.

<sup>278</sup> TNA/FO/371/102471/WU11921/2G, Ankara to FO, 15-May-1952.

<sup>279</sup> TNA/FO/371/102471/WU11921/4G, David Scott-Fox to the Viscount Hood, 27-May-1952.

‘with the object of overcoming Turkish and Greek political objections to the proposed abandonment of Thrace’. As British officials admitted, the new wording proposed by the Standing Group conceded the minimum necessary to meet the Turkish and Greek point of view, and it was also expressed in such broad terms that was unlikely to influence SACEUR’s planning for Greek and Turkish defence.<sup>280</sup> NATO was supposed to pursue ‘an aggressive defence in Southern Europe with particular regard to the holding of as much as possible of the broad territorial zone of the Southern Balkans and Anatolia which can be used as an operational base for offensive operations in the future’.<sup>281</sup> But this was only in theory. Greek and even Turkish military capabilities were inadequate to repel a Soviet or Soviet-bloc attack and successfully implement forward defence without the grant of substantial NATO support (both in peacetime and wartime); apparently, the defence of the Balkan frontier constituted one of SACEUR’s lowest priorities.<sup>282</sup>

The US and British views on Balkan defence were finally reflected in the late 1952 report of NATO’s Military Committee on the alliance’s new strategic guidance, M.C.14/1(Final). Concerning the defence effort in the Southern Flank, and especially the Balkan frontier, it was acknowledged that the coastal zone of the northern Aegean Sea which links Greece and Turkey – and especially Greek Thrace – was very exposed and lacked strategic depth for effective defence. Moreover, since it was expected that Turkey will be attacked simultaneously from several directions (the main efforts launched from the north-west, i.e. Turkish Thrace, and north-east, i.e. the Caucasus), NATO adopted the following strategy: Turkey should be defended ‘as far to the North

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<sup>280</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/42, COS(52)590, 29-October-1952.

<sup>281</sup> NATO/M.C.14/1(Final), Report on Strategic Guidance, 9-December-1952; TNA/DEFE/5/42, COS(52)590, 29-October-1952.

<sup>282</sup> Iatrides, ‘Failed Rampart’, pp.58-74.

and West as possible, provided the defence of Anatolia and the denial to the enemy of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus, are not thereby jeopardized'. Every effort should be made to retain as much of Eastern Thrace in allied hands as possible, at least by the hold of the fortifications of the area (Çatalca-Demirkapi). As in the case of Greek (Western) Thrace, it was stated that, the defence lines should be moved forward 'when practicable'.<sup>283</sup>

It can be therefore concluded that NATO's strategic aims regarding the Southern Flank area had crystallized as follows: First, emphasis would be given to the defence of north-eastern Italy, while north-eastern Greece and a significant portion of north-western Turkey would remain virtually undefended. This was partly because north-eastern Italy was less exposed and could be defended more easily by Italian and NATO forces, contrary to Thrace (Italy did not border with any Soviet satellite state); but probably, it is likely that this was due to greater Italian importance and leverage within NATO and the West in general. Second, although the defence of Turkey was deemed necessary, much more attention was granted to the bolstering of defence of eastern Turkey as part of the Middle East defence, and, next, to the defence of the Straits area, than to Thrace. Obviously the main Turkish roles in West's (not strictly NATO's) military planning was its considerable contribution to Middle Eastern and not Balkan defence, and its use as a platform for the launch of strategic air offensives against the USSR and the Soviet bloc.

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<sup>283</sup> NATO/M.C.14/1(Final), Report on Strategic Guidance, 9-December-1952.

**iii) *The eastern frontier: attempts to coordinate NATO planning with the Middle East defence***

Although the Balkan frontier, both concerning its defence and the proper command set-up, fully occupied NATO, this was apparently not the issue for the Middle East in 1952-3. Of course the British remained fully committed to establish a Middle East defence pact (by mid-1952 called MEDO instead of MEC) and US-UK negotiations kept going to resolve the issue.<sup>284</sup> However, during 1952 the Middle East defence was separated from NATO politics (although NATO channels were still used for talks on Middle Eastern affairs by the interested powers). This was due to several reasons: the failure of the MEC project; the Southern Flank's reorganization and definition of commands and subcommands which led to the final incorporation of the Greek and Turkish land and air forces to CINCSOUTH's command; and the British failure to place all allied naval forces in the Mediterranean under a British CINCMED responsible to the NATO Standing Group.

Furthermore, although the defence of the eastern frontier of the Southern Flank was directly influenced by the situation in the Middle East (or at least by the position of certain countries, like Iraq, Iran and Syria) NATO was always divided on the Middle East. The allies never agreed on the priorities and interests they could promote in the region. The United States was reluctant to support wholeheartedly the British initiatives for the formation of a Middle East defence pact (the MEC and MEDO projects), while the British and the French were trying to maintain a considerable degree of independent national policy. In addition, although NATO was supposed to defend the member-states' assets and interests in the Mediterranean as

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<sup>284</sup> Cohen, *Fighting*, pp.292, 295-6.

well, most European allies were unwilling to commit themselves to the defence of the Eastern Mediterranean, let alone the neighbouring Middle East. Therefore, NATO was unable to devise an integrated vision and strategy on the Middle East, while a connection to the Mediterranean never materialized.<sup>285</sup>

The three major NATO powers kept holding discussions for the coordination of their policy in the region and the establishment of a defence pact. The French were still attached to the Ottawa proposals of September 1951 and were not willing to accept any formula which did not provide that MEDO should be under the direction of the Standing Group representatives wearing different hats. The British agreed with the French on the importance of unity of strategic direction between NATO and MEDO and favoured the idea of Standing Group control. However, the Americans refused to give the Standing Group any role in MEDO, probably because they were unwilling to let the French have a say in the control of global strategy. The British intended to provide 'qualified support' to the French in the hope of reaching a compromise solution, but believed that the French would not withdraw from MEDO if they would not receive satisfaction on their point, and admitted that Britain could not risk losing US support for MEDO, and would have to accept the US views.<sup>286</sup>

After Turkey had secured its final incorporation to SACEUR's and CINCSOUTH's commands in the summer of 1952, it expressed the desire in late September 1952 to become a member of MEDO. It also proposed that the organization be established in some part of Southern Turkey, instead of Egypt or Cyprus (which the

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<sup>285</sup> Rynning, Sten, 'NATO and the Broader Middle East, 1949-2007: The History and Lessons of Controversial Encounters', *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 30:6 (December 2007), pp.905-927.

<sup>286</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/41, COS(52)467, 26-August-1952.

COS preferred).<sup>287</sup> Apparently, the Turks felt more confident after the incorporation of their forces in NATO structures, while the deteriorating situation in Iran might have prompted them to seek a more active role in Middle Eastern defence.<sup>288</sup> Turkey's policy on that matter had changed to such extent that in late 1952 the Turkish General Zeki Okan maintained during an informal discussion with the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Marshal of the RAF Sir John Slessor, that although Turkey was in NATO, it was also part of the Middle East and therefore Turkey and the Middle East were not separate entities. Okan also favoured a British forward stockpile in South-east Turkey since 'Turkey was the main bastion of the Middle East'. He finally pointed out that since the British and the Turks were in general agreement on Middle East defence strategy and on the importance of the Turkish 'bastion', he hoped that Britain would give its full support to the Turkish requests for assistance under the NATO infrastructure programme.<sup>289</sup> Obviously, Turkey sought to play the cards of its geographical position and large army to enhance its leverage both within NATO and the Middle East and to secure additional military aid.

For their part, the British COS were eager to drive the Turks towards a more active military role in the Middle East; this would be in line with British requirements in case of war with the USSR. Of particular concern was the lack of mobility of the Turkish Army which could prove important in a Middle Eastern war. This, combined with Turkish conceptions of national defence, would most likely prompt the Turks to fight only on their soil, but not beyond their borders. The British, however, wanted to persuade them fight outside Turkey and move towards the Caspian Sea, thus threatening the flanks of any Soviet advance towards the Persian Gulf. To this aim, the

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<sup>287</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/42, COS(52)558, 9-October-1952.

<sup>288</sup> HAGFM/1952/File186/4[4], Kontoumas to Greek Foreign Ministry No 2075, 26-September-1952.

<sup>289</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/43/COS(52)723, 29-December-1952.



closest cooperation between the HALFSEE and the Commanders-in-Chief Middle East (and MEDO when set) should be established. Ridgway agreed in principle with this idea, but made clear that he could not officially take any specific steps without instructions and the approval of the Standing Group, since the Middle East was outside the NATO area. He promised to use his influence to persuade the Turks review their conception and fight outside their territory, further east.<sup>290</sup> In any case, the Americans had not yet envisaged a comprehensive strategy on the Middle East, but rather had a quite general and vague concern for the area; this changed only after the Eisenhower administration came to office in 1953, when it adopted a 'northern tier' strategy.<sup>291</sup>

The Turkish President, Çelal Bayar, claimed that since Turkey was admitted to NATO it should pursue a more active policy in the Middle East. Both Bayar and the Chief of the Turkish General Staff, General Nuri Yamut, believed that in the event of a Soviet advance towards the Persian Gulf and/or Suez, no Soviet commander could reasonably expect to bypass Turkey without first attempting to defeat or neutralize it. Turkey could not afford to be flanked by Soviet-controlled states to its south and east. A Soviet invasion of Iraq and/or Iran would almost certainly involve Britain and probably other NATO countries as well. Therefore, 'Turkey would legally carry out its NATO obligations'. But Menderes noted that if the NATO allies did not react to a Soviet thrust in the Middle East, it would be useless for Turkey to react alone.<sup>292</sup> In other words, the overall picture was far from clear. Judging the prospect of real and effective Turkish contribution, the problem of inadequate mobility, firepower and logistics of the Turkish Army would remain unresolved for many years. Thus, from the military point of view it seems doubtful that it could successfully perform the role

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<sup>290</sup> TNA/DEFE/4/55/COS(52)99<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 9-July-1952.

<sup>291</sup> Agmon, 'Defending the Upper Gulf', pp.81-97.

<sup>292</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-1954, VIII, pp.888-90.

expected by the British (an essentially offensive one, which would require that the Turkish forces fight far from their bases) against powerful mechanized and armoured Soviet forces with superior firepower and, possibly, local air superiority in a Middle Eastern war which would be fought in great and open spaces, with the elements of speed and mobility assuming a crucial role.

Italy and Greece also wanted to participate in MEDO.<sup>293</sup> However, the British and the Americans did not favour this. As for the Greek case in particular, London and Washington were in agreement that Greece should not form part of MEDO since it could make no effective contribution to the organization and its participation would only complicate negotiations. The Greeks would only be kept informed of MEDO developments, normally through NATO channels.<sup>294</sup> Of course one could claim that the exclusion of Italy and Greece from MEDO was corollary of the fact that none of them were Middle Eastern states, contrary to Turkey. But that exclusion was also a clear display that from that point on, not only the British but also the Americans acknowledged that Turkey was expected to be the main allied foothold in the Middle East. Thus Turkey's leverage within NATO and particularly the US-UK planning for the Middle East continued to rise.

In late 1952, Admiral Carney had requested permission from SACEUR General Ridgway to send a planning team to Egypt for follow-up planning talks with the British military due to begin in late January.<sup>295</sup> The British officials favoured the holding of staff talks between the British Defence Co-ordination Committee, Middle East (BDCC, ME), and CINCSOUTH's staff, since it was considered that 'the arrival

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<sup>293</sup> HAGFM/1952/File43/1, Michael Melas to Greek Foreign Ministry, 3-March-1952.

<sup>294</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/42, COS(52)559, 10-October-1952.

<sup>295</sup> TNA/FO/371/108040/WU11949/1G, FO to Cairo, 3-January-1953.

of American or other NATO officers for conferences in Canal Zone may indeed be useful from our [the British] point of view, as demonstrating to the Egyptians the community of Western interest in Middle East defence'.<sup>296</sup> Ridgway's Chief of Staff, General Gruenther, advised against this meeting on political grounds (he thought that such discussions would have repercussions on the 'delicate' Anglo-Egyptian negotiations on the future of the Suez base), and suggested that the case be referred to the Standing Group.<sup>297</sup> Indeed, Ridgway considered it would be inadvisable to hold military discussions between AFSOUTH and BDCC Middle East staff officers in the Suez Canal Zone; these had to take place in Naples. After some hesitation, the British finally concurred that the first series of staff talks should take place in Naples.<sup>298</sup> The situation was so delicate and complicated, that the Anglo-Americans, the NATO commanders and the British Cs-in-C Middle East could not agree even where to hold discussions to coordinate NATO-Middle East defence.

The above mentioned staff talks were finally held in late February 1953. It was agreed that future talks should include the British Cs-in-C Middle East Land and Air Forces (the CINCMELF and the CINCMEAF), the NATO COMLANDSOUTHEAST and COMAIRSOUTH, and the Turkish Army and Air Staff.<sup>299</sup> The COS proposed that the British Cs-in-C Middle East be authorized to disclose on a 'need to know basis' such plans and intelligence as were necessary for the integration of NATO/Middle East planning and the establishment of links with

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<sup>296</sup> TNA/FO/371/108040/WU11949/2G, Cairo to FO, 5-January-1953; TNA/DEFE/4/59, COS(53)5<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 15-January-1953.

<sup>297</sup> TNA/FO/371/108040/WU11949/1G, Middle East Office (Fayid) to FO, 4-January-1953.

<sup>298</sup> TNA/FO/371/108040/WU11949/3G, HQ MELF to MOD, 14-January-1953, and MOD to HQ MELF, 15-January-1953.

<sup>299</sup> TNA/FO/371/108040/WU11949/7G, HQ MELF to MOD, 25-March-1953.

AFSOUTH. For its part, the Standing Group approved the disclosure to the Cs-in-C Middle East of any relevant NATO plans and intelligence at future talks.<sup>300</sup>

Meanwhile, US-UK-French discussions continued on the best possible link between the NATO Standing Group and the so called MEDO ad hoc Group. So long as MEDO remained only a prospect, the French wished to appoint as representative to the MEDO ad hoc Group their representative in the NATO Standing Group, particularly if the British did the same; and they anticipated that the latter would accept the US proposal that the Standing Group should be able to consult the ad hoc Group to consider problems concerning the Middle East.<sup>301</sup> Indeed, the British advocated such an arrangement, because they believed that ‘the efficiency of the proposed arrangements would be improved by such an overlap between the memberships of the two Groups’.<sup>302</sup> Obviously, at that point the British and the French favoured the integration of allied Middle East policy to the overall strategy which was formulated by the Standing Group.

The United States, Britain and France agreed that during peacetime, the MEDO Planning Group should make plans to coordinate operations of allied forces in the Middle East with the operations of the adjoining NATO Mediterranean Command and LANDSOUTHEAST headquarters; in wartime, one of SACME’s main tasks would be the protection of SACEUR’s (that is, CINCSOUTH’s) right flank, as well as Turkey’s southern flank.<sup>303</sup> The British emphasized that the defence of the Middle East formed part of the Anglo-American global strategy. It was considered that in Soviet global strategy the Soviet campaigns in the Middle East would be of secondary

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<sup>300</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/45, COS(53)166, 1-April-1953

<sup>301</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/44, COS(53)29, 19-January-1953.

<sup>302</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/44, COS(53)29, 19-January-1953; TNA/DEFE/5/46, COS(53)264, 5-June-1953.

<sup>303</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/44, COS(53)60, 2-February-1953.

importance to those in Western Europe. The initial aims of a Soviet advance would be the improvement of the air defence of the southern USSR by the rapid destruction of Allied air bases, and the occupation of the Dardanelles/Bosporus area. Additional aims might be the diversion of allied forces from the NATO area of operations and the denial of Middle Eastern oil to the West. Those goals could be accomplished by the occupation of Greek and Turkish Thrace on the one hand, and Anatolia, Iraq and Iran on the other. However, though complimentary, the above operations were not interdependent. In any case, it was considered that the Soviet forces – some 18 divisions – would be able to advance deep in Turkey to the Iskenderun-Aleppo line, with the possible support of 950 tactical aircraft and 135 naval aircraft.<sup>304</sup> The British military believed that Soviet naval forces or submarines would not operate in the Mediterranean until the Straits were occupied by the Soviets. However, Greek Thrace was likely to be captured within six days or earlier, so fast Soviet-bloc patrol boats might be shipped overland and begin to operate in the Aegean. Submarines could also be sent in the Mediterranean and return to Albania or Thrace upon, or soon afterwards, the outbreak of hostilities. Generally, at least initially, the only considerable threat to NATO naval forces would be restricted to Soviet air attacks. The latter would not pose a serious threat for allied shipping for at least six weeks after the outbreak of hostilities, because they would be mainly preoccupied with the land campaign in the Balkans and Asia Minor; still, the ports of the region might constitute a target. It was anticipated that as the campaign against Italy, Greece and Turkey developed, the bombing of allied shipping would intensify.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/45, COS(53)132, 6-March-1953; see also Michael Cohen, *Strategy and Politics in the Middle East 1954-1960. Defending the Northern Tier* (London & New York: Frank Cass, 2005), pp.41-42.

<sup>305</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/45, COS(53)132, 6-March-1953.

## ***Conclusion***

The constant and intense negotiations concerning the reorganization of the Southern European Command and the establishment of a sound command set-up, which took place after the final and definite Greek and Turkish admission to NATO and their inclusion under SACEUR's jurisdiction in February 1952, aimed also, or even mainly, to serve political considerations. These negotiations continued to occur mainly between the Americans and the British, both within and outside NATO. The Americans, aware of their preponderance in the Eastern Mediterranean, pressed for the incorporation of Greek and Turkish land and air forces into CINCSOUTH's Command, and wanted the naval Mediterranean Command to be subordinate to him as well. The Greeks and the Turks strongly favoured the US view, since for political, military and prestige reasons they wanted to be under a US-led command, and not under a British-led new South-eastern command linked with the Middle East or even a sub-command under an Italian General; indeed, once they succeeded on their admission to NATO, Greece and Turkey strongly opposed any other settlement than their inclusion to CINCSOUTH's command. For their part, the British remained firm on their effort to orient the Greek-Turkish sector more towards the Middle East, but had no option but to concede to the final placement of Greek and Turkish forces to CINCSOUTH. They also had to compromise on the Mediterranean Command issue. The French and the Italians did not want or could not do much to shape the developments; Greece was too weak but also too satisfied to intervene; but Turkey again undertook an active policy to make plain its views and defend its interests. In any case, the US views prevailed since no one, the British not least, could risk losing American support.

However, from the very beginning NATO faced paramount problems in its effort to make a substantial military contribution on the defence of the Southern Flank, on its Balkan and eastern sectors in particular. Apart from the maritime aviation of the US Sixth Fleet, NATO did not have any real potential to help Greece and Turkey, and Greek and Turkish forces were incapable of defending effectively against an Eastern bloc attack. The prospect of cooperation with Titoist Yugoslavia offered a chance of redressing the unfavourable balance to some extent, but even so the major NATO countries did not have identical interests and aims with Greece and Turkey and were sceptical about the consequences of a Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav alliance on NATO obligations. In fact, although the issue of a Middle Eastern command organization did not occupy NATO to considerable extent after early 1952, the Middle East had much more gravity regarding global strategy and defence planning both for US and British policy-makers than South-eastern Europe.

### 3. THE ASCENDANCY OF THE SOUTHERN FLANK OF NATO, 1953-1954

In January 1953, Dwight Eisenhower assumed office as President of the United States. His closest associate on the formulation of a new US grand strategy (which obviously influenced NATO strategy) was the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. Eisenhower and Dulles were eager to adopt a new strategy which would put more emphasis on economic rather than military strength by slowing down the pace of conventional rearmament.<sup>306</sup> However, the Eisenhower administration had to review for several months the US national security and containment policy before it would be able to devise a new, comprehensive strategy. In May 1953, the first step was made by proceeding to a thorough investigation of various courses of US national security policy.<sup>307</sup> Moreover, in June Eisenhower appointed new service chiefs: General Matthew Ridgway and Admiral Robert Carney left their NATO commands and were appointed Army Chief of Staff and Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) respectively, while General Nathan Twining became Air Chief of Staff and Admiral Arthur Radford Chairman of the JCS. General Gruenther replaced Ridgway as SACEUR, while Admiral William Fechteler, the former CNO, became CINCSOUTH.<sup>308</sup> Finally, in

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<sup>306</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War – Revised and Expanded Edition* (Oxford & New York: OUP, 2005), pp.131-3.

<sup>307</sup> Saki Dockrill, *Eisenhower's New Look National Security Policy, 1953-61* (Basingstoke & London: Macmillan Press, 1996), pp.33-35.

<sup>308</sup> Lawrence Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff. The First Twenty-five Years* (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1976), pp. 39, 57, 73, 85; Saki Dockrill, *Eisenhower's New Look*, pp.22, 38.



January 1954 Lieutenant General Paul Kendall replaced Lieutenant General William Wyman as COMLANDSOUTHEAST.<sup>309</sup>

Alfred Gruenther's appointment as SACEUR was not unexpected. Having served as SACEUR's Chief of Staff under both Eisenhower and Ridgway for two and a half years, he was familiar with NATO issues. It was also known that Eisenhower always wanted Gruenther to succeed him. Moreover, in mid-1953 the general context was different from that of early 1952, and Gruenther appeared more suitable for the post than Ridgway: the latter was an outstanding and inspiring field commander, and his role was primarily to boost European morale when Cold War was at its peak, bolster NATO defence and press the Europeans to rearm themselves. However, he lacked diplomatic abilities. Stalin's death and the end of the Korean War led to a relative, gradual relaxation of East-West tension, and the fear of an immediate general war was relatively weakened. Furthermore, the pace of rearmament was losing its tempo in most allied European countries, and Ridgway overdid it by 'putting relentless pressure' on them to achieve the Lisbon goals. Since Eisenhower himself was moving towards the adoption of a US strategy which downgraded the role of conventional forces, the time was ripe for the removal of Ridgway and the appointment of Gruenther. The latter had not been a field commander but was an excellent planner and possessed considerable political-diplomatic skills. He therefore appeared more suitable than Ridgway to deal with such thorny issues as the development of multinational strategy, the settlement of national and multinational force levels – and therefore

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<sup>309</sup> DDEL/Gruenther/NATO series/SACEUR, Box 4, 6-January-1954.

defence spending – and the introduction of West German forces into the Western defence establishment.<sup>310</sup>

By 1953-4 the command structure and setup of the Southern Flank area had been finalised, and NATO, the United States and Britain placed much emphasis on organising its defence by devising operational plans, taking into account the evolving US and NATO strategy, the Italian, Greek and Turkish military (and financial) potential, and the estimates on Soviet bloc capabilities. Overall, it appears that during that period the situation in the Southern Flank was not satisfactory, while it is highly questionable if allied forces could mount a successful defence against Soviet bloc aggression. Nevertheless, the heavy reliance on tactical nuclear weapons, though controversial, in conjunction with the establishment of the Balkan Alliance during 1954, offered for the first time the opportunity for mounting a vigorous defence against a Soviet bloc advance in the Balkan frontier. Even more significant, these developments added considerable credibility to allied deterrence in the area. On the political field, in 1953-4 the Southern Flank reached its peak: after the strains suffered over command issues during 1951-2, the US-UK relationship had been fully restored, while Greek-Turkish cooperation expanded further, managing to link indirectly Yugoslavia with the Western defence system.

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<sup>310</sup> George Eugene Pelletier, 'Ridgway', pp.31-52, and Robert Jordan, 'Gruenther: Attempts to Retain NATO Solidarity', pp.53-72, in Jordan (ed.) *Generals in International Politics*; Omar Bradley and Clay Blair, *A General's Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), pp.659-60; John Duffield, *Power Rules: The Evolution of NATO's Conventional Force Posture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.70.

**i) *The evolution of NATO strategy and its application on the Southern Flank***

NATO strategy underwent considerable change from late 1953 until late 1954. Both in Europe and the United States the cost of rearmament had bred domestic political resistance to the build-up of conventional forces. A significant gap existed between NATO conventional force requirements and the forces that the allies were able, or willing, to raise. Most European allies were reluctant to subordinate their economic recovery to rearmament.<sup>311</sup> A concurrent development was innovations in the military technological field: first, the invention of the hydrogen (thermonuclear, or fusion) bomb, which was a thousand times more powerful than the fission bomb, and second, the introduction and growing availability of tactical nuclear weapons (nuclear weapons small enough to be used at the battlefield and not for strategic bombing). The advent of the thermonuclear era meant that so long as the United States enjoyed a significant technological lead both in those weapons themselves and the delivery means (initially the strategic bomber) over the USSR, then the Soviets were expected to be deterred by the US strategic 'sword'. Furthermore, the development of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe under US control and their integration with NATO planning and forces was expected to compensate for continuing NATO inferiority in conventional land forces.<sup>312</sup>

However, even in this new era NATO conventional forces continued to play a very significant role in NATO planning. If the US strategic arsenal constituted the alliance's 'sword', substantial and highly-trained conventional forces in-being would be the 'shield'. The latter would, first of all, provide a cushion of time to allow the full

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<sup>311</sup> Duffield, *Power Rules*, pp.71, 75; Jordan, 'Gruenther', pp.53-72.

<sup>312</sup> David Alan Rosenberg, 'The Origins of Overkill. Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945-1960', *International Security* 7:4 (spring 1983), pp.3-71; Duffield, *Power Rules*, pp.75, 77; Jordan, 'Gruenther', pp.53-72.

mobilization of NATO's potential. Secondly, they would force the Soviet bloc to mobilize and concentrate its land forces before launching an attack against Western Europe, thus providing not only a warning period to the allies, but also lucrative targets for NATO's tactical nuclear arsenal. The masses of Soviet armoured, mechanized and artillery formations had become increasingly vulnerable to allied firepower of unprecedented destructiveness. Therefore, the requirements for active land forces in NATO remained more or less the same as those agreed at the Lisbon meeting. Only the number of reserve forces was considerably cut (though not in the Southern Flank). It was justifiably argued that tactical nuclear weapons would supplement conventional forces, but not replace them. Consequently, the West Europeans could not expect to make savings on their defence spending, and were being pressed by Gruenther – although with more finesse than by Ridgway – to achieve the alliance's goals for active units by raising more forces, extending their conscription periods and bearing the cost of rearmament. Nevertheless, the new SACEUR was not more successful than his predecessor in convincing the West Europeans to continue their defence effort.<sup>313</sup>

The new NATO strategy, as described in the MC.48 document, was finally and officially approved in December 1954 by the NAC. According to MC.48, the most important factor in a future general war would be superiority in strategic and tactical weapons and their delivery systems. To deter and, if necessary, defeat Soviet aggression (even a conventional one), NATO would have to resort to the use of tactical and strategic nuclear weapons. Analysis of the new NATO doctrine and of the argument that it triggered (such as the problem of NATO turning nuclear and the role of European allies, SACEUR's authority to launch nuclear weapons in case of

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid; Duffield, *Power Rules*, pp.77, 82.

emergency, or estimates that the new strategy might actually require more troops and greater expenditures to be effectively implemented) is beyond the scope of this thesis. Here it should be mentioned that the new NATO strategy, placing emphasis on all-out response to an all-out aggression, appeared to offer, at least initially, a more credible deterrence against possible Soviet aggression, and most importantly, a realistic chance for the implementation of a truly forward defence.<sup>314</sup>

Under certain prerequisites, it was expected that SACEUR would be able to stop a Soviet advance on West German soil. It is important to make clear that the forward defence strategy was adopted for the Central Region of NATO, since defending Western Europe was not only the top priority of the United States and NATO, but was also regarded as feasible for military as well as geographic reasons (to name two, the existence of modern allied forces and of strategic depth). However, the situation was quite different as regards the defence of the southern region, particularly Greece and Turkey: despite the incorporation of those two countries into the western defence system, the establishment of US bases on their territory, the flow of US economic aid and the supply of military hardware to their armed forces, no forward defence was adopted in the Balkan sub-theatre for political, military and geographical reasons. In effect, even prompt support by the Sixth Fleet to Greek and Turkish forces at the outbreak of a possible conflict was not at all guaranteed.<sup>315</sup> Furthermore, Italy's defence remained problematic due to lack of cooperation with Yugoslavia to cover effectively the Ljubljana Gap, and from mid-1953 onwards virtually no Atlantic initiative was undertaken to ensure the defence of the Middle East, or at least its linkage with the Southern Flank. The above bleak situation was ameliorated by the

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<sup>314</sup> Duffield, *Power Rules*, pp.87-90.

<sup>315</sup> For the non-adoption of forward defence in the Balkan frontier, see Iatrides, 'Failed Rampart', pp.58-74.

conclusion of the Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav pacts of 1953-4 which redressed the regional military balance and offered the prospect of a more forward defence. Nevertheless, the Balkan Alliance was a short-lived project, and in any case no coordination with NATO was ever achieved. Finally, it is interesting to note that Greece and Turkey were the only member-states that vigorously pursued their rearmament effort. Unfortunately, they did not possess the necessary economic-industrial potential to sustain effectively their effort, and US aid was never sufficient enough to fill that gap. Greece soon had to cut down its force levels to avoid an economic breakdown, while Turkey was never able to achieve its force goals and modernize its armed forces; moreover, the combination of excessive defence expenditure with the mismanagement of the Turkish economy from 1954 onwards, drove the latter into a serious crisis. Therefore, it should be stressed that the countries which were less able to rearm themselves were the only ones within NATO that put in every effort to meet that end, while the Western Europeans (including Italy) who had a considerable economic-industrial capability lacked the will to bear the cost of rearmament.

NATO made an early effort to implement in the Southern Flank area the emerging new strategy which relied heavily on the US retaliatory capability, and increasingly on tactical atomic weapons. In the spring of 1953 the NATO and US Commanders in Southern Europe considered the use of nuclear weapons to defend Thrace during talks with Greek and Turkish officials. Those defence plans were correlated with the mission of the Sixth Fleet and its ability to bomb enemy targets, thus providing 'atom aid' to Greece and Turkey. However, no pledge was made by Admiral Carney or other NATO or US official, since the CINCSOUTH did not enjoy

such authority; only the SACEUR could release specific information on the usage of nuclear weapons, although a small group at HALFSEE had been working on the issue for a long time.<sup>316</sup> It should be mentioned that until mid-1953 the atomic stockpile was nearly completely under civilian control. Only at that point did President Eisenhower make some atomic weapons immediately available to the military by transferring a considerable number of such complete devices for deployment afloat and ashore.<sup>317</sup>

Just a couple of months before the official adoption of a new strategy by NATO as envisaged in the MC.48 document in November 1954, the alliance approved a Capabilities Plan for Allied Command Europe (ACE), prepared by SHAPE. That plan (SHAPE/330/54, enclosed in SGM-600-54) was based upon the employment of allied major force units in the numbers estimated to be available in mid-1957. Generally, the same applied for the intelligence assessment and estimate of Soviet bloc strength and capabilities, covering the period 1954-8. The NATO capabilities plan analysed nine campaigns which NATO or the Soviets were likely to undertake in case of war. Three of them dealt with the arrest of Soviet land advance in Italy, Greece and Turkey. Although each case was different and will be analysed below, some common aims and patterns existed: any Soviet advance into a position capable of severing allied communications in the Mediterranean should be prevented; to that end, the Soviet advance should be held, or at least delayed for a significant period, as far North as possible on Italian, Greek and Turkish territory. This could only be accomplished by the prompt and extensive use of air ground and missile delivered tactical atomic and thermonuclear weapons against Soviet bloc forces and lines of communications.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, pp.832-3.

<sup>317</sup> Rosenberg, 'The Origins', pp.3-71.

<sup>318</sup> NATO/SGM-600-54, Capabilities Plan ACE 1957, 10-September-1954.

The above doctrine remained valid at least until late 1957-early 1958, when it was modified following the adoption of M.C.14/2 and M.C.70 documents.

In the case of Italy, a defence position should be established in the Northeast to channel the Soviet attack through the few narrow passes across the Alps, which constituted a perfect natural barrier, and the wider Ljubljana-Gorizia Gap. Attacking forces would thus have to concentrate to cross those passes, providing lucrative targets for allied tactical nuclear weapons. Another positive factor was that the Soviet forces would first have to overrun Austria and north-western Yugoslavia to enter Italy; therefore early warning of enemy moves would be obtained to disrupt Soviet advance and give Italy the opportunity to start its mobilisation. However, negative aspects existed as well. The Italian forces would need about thirty days to mobilise, while the centre of mobilisation was the densely populated and highly industrial Northern region; this was vulnerable to Soviet nuclear attack which could paralyse the whole Italian defence effort. It was also expected that the Soviets would also deliver atomic strikes against war sustaining facilities (thirteen allied airfields and five Italian ports). In addition, particularly during the crucial initial period of the conflict the Soviets would probably enjoy significant superiority over allied (mainly Italian) forces, both on land and in the air. It was assessed that the Soviets could deploy twenty divisions (including four armoured and six mechanised with a total of 2,600 tanks) and 1,200 aircraft (though only 600 would be actually assigned to the campaign). Finally, no defence coordination had been achieved with Yugoslavia to form part of the Italian (and Western) defence system. In any case, if Soviet advance and penetrations threatened to sever the Mediterranean air and sea lines of communication, 'maximum allied effort employing land, air, naval and amphibious forces, with all forms of



atomic support' would be directed against those penetrations. The primary NATO goal was the defence of the Italian peninsula and Sicily. Should they fall, the Soviets would cut the allied lines of communication (LOC) in the Mediterranean theatre, isolating Greece and Turkey. Furthermore, they could also project power on North Africa and even outflank the central region from the South. At any rate, NATO military officials assessed that the primary objectives with regard to Italian defence (that is, prevention of a deep Soviet advance which might sever the Mediterranean LOC and disrupt Italian mobilisation) could be achieved.<sup>319</sup>

The situation on the Balkan frontier appeared bleaker, at least before the conclusion of the Balkan Alliance. NATO military authorities acknowledged that Greek Thrace and eastern Macedonia were virtually indefensible. The Greek and Turkish defence positions in Thrace were adjacent, but not dependent on one another for land support – a telling indication of the low level of integration between Greek and Turkish forces, which would characterize the entire history of the Southern Flank. NATO officials hoped that successful delaying action (mainly by launching nuclear strikes against advancing enemy forces most probably on *Greek* soil, unless sufficient warning period was offered) would permit completion of the mobilisation to prevent a Soviet advance southwards. As mentioned the primary aim was to oppose the establishment of a strong Soviet foothold on the Northern shores of the Mediterranean. In the Greek case, the numerous coastal islands could serve as re-fuelling bases for Soviet submarines, if they fell into enemy hands. Furthermore, the security of coastal sea lines of communications (SLOCs) in this area was extremely important; in wartime, 40 per cent of the support for forces in Northern Greece should use coastal sea lift, because of the limited road and rail capacity. However, the unsatisfactory air

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

defence situation made this task extremely difficult, as was the task of defending Greek territory in general. As already mentioned, geography was unfavourable, and the most critical factor would be the close cooperation with Yugoslav forces. Should Soviet-Bulgarian forces (with a considerable tank and mechanised element) advance in Southern Yugoslavia, they could easily turn southwards via the Monastir Gap and the Vardar Valley outflanking the main Greek defence position along the Struma River, then sweep across Greece and quickly destroy its ability to fight. Only if Yugoslavia combined its efforts with Greece had the latter a chance to resist for some time a combined Soviet-Bulgarian attack, which would be possibly comprised of fifteen divisions and around 600 aircraft, thus being significantly preponderant over Greek (and other NATO) forces. Nine airfields and two ports (Piraeus and Salonika) would constitute potential targets for Soviet nuclear strikes, but it was estimated that the Soviets would probably prefer to seize them intact to sustain future operation in the Mediterranean theatre.<sup>320</sup>

If it was implicitly acknowledged that mainland Greece was probably indefensible, NATO considered that a significant portion of Turkish territory could and should be defended and held. Three were the focal points: the Straits, which constituted the only outlet to the Black Sea and a natural barrier, the central Anatolian Plateau, which at a later stage could constitute a platform for the launch of an air and even land counteroffensive against the USSR itself, and the Iskenderun area in South-eastern Turkey, where a threat towards the flank of any Soviet advance through Iran or Iraq should be established. However, the main Turkish industrial and economical centres (for example Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa) as well as military facilities and LOCs (bases around the Straits, the Izmir port and the Çiğli air base complex) lay in North-

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

western and Western Turkey. Therefore, this area should also be protected from a Soviet deep penetration or nuclear neutralisation, otherwise the whole defence effort would be jeopardised. Still, the NATO planners did not regard the whole of the Turkish territory as defensible. Although geography was much more favourable in the Turkish sub-theatres comparing to the Greek frontier (mainly due to the existence of significant strategic depth and the nature of the terrain), the defence of Turkey would demand a huge effort. The Soviets were expected to commit significant land, air, naval, amphibious and airborne forces to their campaigns against Turkey, and would probably strike at various fronts: Turkish Thrace and the Straits, the area east of the Bosphorus, the northern Turkish coast, and north-eastern Turkey. Soviet (and Bulgarian) forces might comprise of thirty-one to thirty-three divisions with 3,300 tanks, and around 2,500 aircraft, while they would probably expend tactical nuclear weapons against Turkish forces, the allied air complex in Turkey and the three major ports (Izmir, Mersina and Iskenderun), particularly if it appeared that the Soviet campaign against Turkey was about to fail. At any rate, once again the cornerstone of NATO strategy was the extensive use of tactical nuclear weapons against Soviet bloc forces concentrating in Bulgaria and the Caucasus and advancing in Eastern Thrace and North-eastern Turkey, and against Soviet beachheads established by amphibious or airborne forces on the northern coast; in addition, a major allied interdiction campaign against Bulgarian facilities and communication centres would be undertaken to disrupt Soviet bloc logistics.<sup>321</sup>

Nevertheless, it is highly doubtful whether the NATO strategy described above could be implemented successfully and bear some fruit, at least during this period. First of all, as analysed below, in the mid-1950s the military establishments of

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

the Southern Flank countries had numerous weaknesses, lacked equipment and training, and could not meet NATO standards. A huge qualitative gap existed between Italian, Greek and Turkish units and Soviet or even Soviet-bloc ones. Secondly, it was obvious that NATO would face a very grave situation in the air around the Southern Flank area, at least at the crucial initial period of a conflict: the Italian, Greek and Turkish air forces were no match to Soviet bloc ones, either quantitatively or qualitatively, while the few US aircraft stationed in Italy and Turkey could only make a modest contribution at the early stages of a war. Last but not least, the Sixth Fleet aircraft would probably offer some relieve only in Italy, since US planning provided for its concentration in the Western Mediterranean upon the outbreak of a conflict. At any rate, the Sixth Fleet's 150-160 aircraft could not suffice to come to Italian, Greek and Turkish rescue, particularly since the Sixth Fleet's primary missions were different: the interdiction of the Soviet build-up and support of forces and SLOC, and the inhibition of Soviet attacks on allied shipping, convoys, and naval forces.

Moreover, NATO's heavy, if not exclusive reliance on tactical nuclear weapons, to check a Soviet advance does not appear to have been well-founded. On the one hand, it seems that the United States and NATO never managed to devise a solid operational plan for the use of those weapons on the battlefield. Indeed, the results of exercises and simulations soon demonstrated that the notion of 'limited' nuclear warfare was illusionary, and that the extensive use of tactical nuclear weapons would cause unprecedented damage.<sup>322</sup> On the other hand, the new NATO strategic concept did not provide for the actual equipping of allied forces with tactical nuclear weapons; for the time being, only US, and, subsequently, UK forces all stationed at the

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<sup>322</sup> Stefanidis, *Asymmetroi Hetairoi: oi Enomenes Politeies kai he Ellada ston psychro polemo, 1953-1961 [Unequal Partners: The United States and Greece in the Cold War, 1953-1961]*(Athens: Patakis, 2002), pp.142-3.

Central Front had those weapons at their disposal.<sup>323</sup> Until after the mid-1950s, Italian, Greek and Turkish forces virtually had no warheads and delivery means to implement the MC.48 strategy. In other words, it could be argued that the new NATO doctrine of MC.48 really applied to the ‘more’ crucial Central Front, and rather ignored the Southern one, or at least a great geographical part of it. Therefore, as the military usefulness of the tactical nuclear weapons remained ambiguous, at least in the Southern Flank region, their primary importance seemed to lay on their deterrent effect as an additional element of the US nuclear shield. Despite all those deficiencies, it should be noted that the Southern Flank, or at least the Balkan frontier, would never be stronger than in 1954: Greek-Turkish cooperation and friendship had reached its peak, while the establishment of the tripartite Balkan Pacts created a continuous, solid front in the region. This was particularly important for Greece, the most exposed Southern Flank member, which would be able to put up a version of forward defence.

## **ii) *The political and military posture of the Southern Flank countries***

From now on material of the NATO Annual Reviews will be used to give a relatively detailed account of the military situation of the three Southern Flank countries. The aim is to see how the NATO authorities assessed Italian, Greek and Turkish capabilities and weaknesses and how the Southern Flank defence position (or actually that of each separate member, rather than of the Southern Flank as an integral whole)

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<sup>323</sup> Duffield, *Power Rules*, p.89.

developed from 1953 to 1959. Until now, such an analysis does not exist. At this point we will discuss the vents of 1953-4.

It has already been demonstrated by prominent scholars of Cold War Italian history, that Italian policy-makers, and particularly the military, relied heavily on close cooperation with the Americans to secure not only protection against external threats (either the Soviet bloc or Titoist Yugoslavia), but also domestic stability. The Italian General Staff was sceptical towards any European security project, and considered any plans for the creation of a European force, such as the European Defence Community (EDC), as a second best option compared to NATO and US participation in European defence.<sup>324</sup> In the long term, Italy hoped that NATO would develop into a US-guided political partnership. Moreover, from late 1953 until the spring of 1954, a debate on the future evolution of Western defence took place among senior Italian policy-makers and diplomats. While some advocated a more pro-European stance (emphasizing a quick ratification of the EDC Treaty), others were pessimistic about the EDC's chances and opted for the strengthening of NATO and of US-Italian ties.<sup>325</sup> For their part, the Italian military adopted very quickly the new course of the 'New Look' doctrine of the Eisenhower administration and advocated the idea of the deployment of US tactical nuclear weapons in Italy.<sup>326</sup>

However, Italy not only relied on US preponderance, but also sought to pursue independent action within the framework of that preponderance, particularly from 1954 onwards. The so called 'Neo-Atlanticist' agenda included extended

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<sup>324</sup> Leopoldo Nuti, 'Continuity and Change in Italian Defence Policy (1945-1995)', in Michel Dumoulin (ed.), *La Communauté Européenne De Défense, Leçons Pour Demain?* (Bruxelles: PIE – P. Lang, 2000), pp.375-400.

<sup>325</sup> Antonio Varsori, 'Italy and Western Defence 1948-1955: The Elusive Ally', in Beatrice Heuser and Robert O'Neil (eds.), *Securing Peace in Europe, 1945-62. Thoughts for the post-Cold War Era* (London: Macmillan in association with St Antony's College, Oxford, 1992), pp.196-221.

<sup>326</sup> Nuti, 'Continuity and Change', pp.375-400.

consultation among NATO allies, intensified economic cooperation within NATO, and the promotion of Italian economic and commercial interests in the Arab world. Regarding the latter, Rome claimed that since it had ceased to be a colonial power (contrary to Britain and France), it could act as a mediator between the West and the Arabs and thwart the increasing Soviet influence in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. The Italians hoped that, at best, Neo-Atlanticism might establish a stable link between Italy's participation in NATO and Rome's policy in the Middle East.<sup>327</sup> Despite its aspirations, Italy remained more or less confined to the Mediterranean, which was only a peripheral theatre, both politically/diplomatically and militarily; Western Europe remained the focal point of NATO and US policy.

As regards its attitude towards NATO, Italy was less concerned than most other western allies (not to mention Greece and Turkey) about the Soviet military threat. The Italians were very reluctant to increase their military spending to meet the agreed force levels.<sup>328</sup> From the second half of 1952 onwards, Rome's interest in defence issues decreased significantly. Several reasons explain this: Italy did not have common borders with the Soviet bloc and did not feel an imminent threat (with respect to Yugoslavia, although Italian-Yugoslavian relations remained tense until 1954, a bilateral conflict did not seem very likely any more). In addition, the Italians felt that Washington and London did not support a favourable resolution of the Trieste issue, and that the West did not attribute to Italy the appropriate international status and recognition. Within NATO, Italy had expressed since February 1952 deep reservations about the feasibility of the rearmament effort agreed at the Lisbon meeting. The Italian

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<sup>327</sup> Alessandro Brogi, 'Ike and Italy: The Eisenhower Administration and Italy's "Neo-Atlanticist" Agenda', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4/3 (Summer 2002), pp.5-35.

<sup>328</sup> Ilaria Poggiolini, 'Italian Revisionism: Status and Security Problems 1943-1956', in Michael Howard et al., *The Quest for stability: problems of West European security, 1918-1957* (London: OUP, 1993), 327-359.

government was preoccupied mainly with financial and economic problems rather than military ones, and General Alfred Gruenther publicly described Italy as ‘the weak link’ in the alliance. This trend continued after August 1953 and in subsequent years, when Giuseppe Pella, Amintore Fanfani and Mario Scelba succeeded De Gasperi in the premiership. Moreover, Rome was aware that in case of general war, Italy could not defend itself against a major Soviet invasion and preferred to rely exclusively on NATO for its defence; the Italian leadership was much more concerned about a possible internal threat on behalf of the Communist Party (PCI). Last but not least, the Italian military did not play a significant role in the formulation of Italian grand strategy, partly due to the Army’s low esteem and its poor record of performance in the past.<sup>329</sup>

The Italians were annoyed at NATO’s lack of consultation with Italy on the Greek-Yugoslav-Turkish entente and military talks.<sup>330</sup> Moreover, during the 1954 negotiations with the Americans on the issue of the establishment of US bases in Italy, Rome took a very hard line: the Italians were unwilling to grant any military facilities to US forces unless the dispute with Belgrade over Trieste was resolved in Italy’s favour. They tried to justify their attitude claiming that without a positive resolution of the Trieste issue (which obviously could only come with strong US support) the parliament would not ratify any agreement on military facilities or bases. Such development might result in the collapse of the pro-western centre-right government, and that might put US and NATO strategy in Southern Europe at risk. Of course, these arguments regarding that alleged weakness contradicted Rome’s aspirations for great-power status. The Americans were initially frustrated by that attitude, but there were

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<sup>329</sup> Varsori, ‘Italy and Western Defence’, 196-221

<sup>330</sup> Poggiolini, ‘Italian Revisionism’, pp.327-359.



not any serious repercussions for the US-Italian relations and Italy's position within NATO. The Italians soon granted bases to the United States, the Trieste issue was resolved, and the Eisenhower administration gradually acknowledged some of the benefits of the Neo-Atlanticism (notably, the promotion of a greater American presence in the Mediterranean and the potential for a more balanced burden-sharing in NATO).<sup>331</sup>

On the military field, the situation in the Italian Armed Forces was not considered as satisfactory by the NATO experts, although Italy spent nearly 6.5 per cent of its GNP on defence. There were two major problems: the general shortage of equipment which reduced the efficiency and combat readiness of the Italian armed forces, and the critical situation in the Italian Air Force, which suffered from serious shortfalls in interceptor day-fighters (IDF) – a NATO-wide problem – and all-weather fighters (AWX) existed. Those shortfalls were particularly serious because large deficiencies in maritime aircraft already existed in the Mediterranean, and therefore Italy should take urgently the necessary steps to achieve efficient operation of maritime aircraft. The Italian Air Force's shortages in aircrafts could not be remedied until 1955-56, when new aircraft would be available. Thus Italy had to be prepared for the transition from obsolete and obsolescent types to modern ones. In addition, there was a shortage of electronic equipment in all three services: tracking radars for anti-aircraft defence in the Army, radar for the air control and early warning (AC&W) system in the Air Force (which was underdeveloped), and general electronic equipment for the Navy.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Brogi, 'Ike and Italy'. 5-35.

<sup>332</sup> NATO/C-M(53)35, Report on Annual Review – Italy, 15-April-1953; NATO/C-M(53)150, Annual Review 1953 – Italy, 24-November-1953.

The NATO goals for late 1953 regarding the numerical strength of the Italian Army were six infantry, one mountain and two armoured divisions at M-Day rising to ten, two and one-third and three respectively at M+30, bringing the total forces to 14 and a half divisions. The situation in the Italian Navy was considered more or less satisfactory. The air force was reported to have almost 490 aircrafts, though many obsolete types were included. The NATO authorities believed that the Italian defence effort was somewhat below the NATO average. Since there were already signs of considerable stabilisation and recovery of the Italian economy, the NATO specialists claimed that Italy should be able to increase somewhat its defence expenditure and also activate some of the available but still idle production capacity of the Italian industry which would be suitable for defence equipment. This would also contribute to the relief of unemployment which remained extremely high. The acquisition of the IDF and AWW, the electronic equipment and transport vehicles was set as the first priority. In any case, the NATO authorities believed that a reduction in the Italian defence effort, as was the aim of the Italian government for 1954-55, could and should be avoided. Last but not least, the Staff recommended the continuance of financial assistance by the United States.<sup>333</sup>

By the end of 1954 the Italian NATO command forces would consist of eight divisions and two mountain brigades on M-Day and also 410 aircraft and few vessels (the main units were three cruisers, two destroyers and two submarines). Except for a shortfall of two fighter squadrons (an interceptor day-fighter and an all-weather fighter one), those forces were in conformity with the force goals set in Lisbon. NATO drew attention to the need for substantial increase in the numbers of long-service officers

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<sup>333</sup> NATO/C-M(53)35, Report on Annual Review – Italy 15-April-1953; NATO/C-M(53)150, Report on Annual Review 1953 – Italy, 24-November-1953.

and NCOs in army D-day units. A reorganisation plan had been recently approved aiming at the improvement of the effectiveness of the Air Force and of M-day Army forces and at increasing the generally poor training status of the Italian reserves. The Italians also devised a new construction programme for the Navy for a moderate increase and modernisation of their fleet in the next few years. However, the most critical deficiencies (as the comprehensive operation of the AC&W system) were not addressed. Finally, despite considerable progress in the number of aircrews, the training standard remained low, due to limitation on flying hours to save aviation fuel.<sup>334</sup>

Adherence to the Atlantic community did not ease the Greek defence problem. During the 1950s, Greece was the most vulnerable point of NATO's southern area. Until the spring of 1954 the land forces numbered over 140,000 men (Greece had a population of about seven million people in the early 1950s) and the Greek Army enjoyed a fine reputation due to its performance during the Second World War, the Greek Civil War and the Korean War. However, its equipment was obsolete and they possessed no medium or heavy tanks and only a few artillery pieces. The Greek naval and air forces were also very weak. Consequently, the combination of military weakness, unfavourable geographic landscape and lack of strategic depth, meant that the Greek Armed Forces would be in deep trouble in case of a general or local war.

The Conservative Prime Minister and former Commander-in-Chief, Marshal Alexandros Papagos, stressed in Parliament in March 1953 that the Greek army's primary task was to deal with a Korea-style sudden attack to cover the completion of

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<sup>334</sup> NATO/C-M(54)100, Report on the 1954 Annual Review– Italy, 20-November-1954.

mobilization. Papagos favoured the adoption of a forward strategy but Greece lacked the means to implement it (armoured and mechanized forces and an adequate number of jet planes – the first *F-84s* began to arrive only in 1952-53) and US aid would not address those deficiencies. The Greek forces did not have the capability to repel on their own a Bulgarian attack.<sup>335</sup> The Greek political and military leadership was very anxious to acquire some armoured units, specifically two or three tank regiments, since actually no armour was allocated to the Third Corp, which defended Greek Macedonia. The 239 obsolete Greek light tanks were kept in strategic reserve. Despite the urgent Greek demand and the hope that Greece would receive some US tanks, these were not forthcoming.<sup>336</sup> In late 1954, during talks on the reorganisation of the Greek Armed Forces, NATO officials proposed the formation of an additional M-day division which would include ‘armoured elements’. The Greeks preferred the creation of an armoured division (and asked for the relative equipment). Nevertheless, the NATO authorities did not agree; the division would be an infantry (though ‘special’) one.<sup>337</sup>

The only alternative for the adoption of a more active defence policy (as compared to the option of mere retreat and abandonment of north-eastern Greek territory) was regional cooperation with Turkey and Yugoslavia. Such development would redress the Balkan military balance and lessen the Bulgarian threat.<sup>338</sup> That idea was not new. Despite recent Greek-Yugoslav enmity in 1944-48, Greece and Serbia had cooperated very successfully against their regional opponents during the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, while Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey were among the signatories of

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<sup>335</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.25.

<sup>336</sup> DDEL/Gruenther Papers/NATO Series/Chief-of-Staff, Box 2, 27-April-1953.

<sup>337</sup> NATO/C-M(54)100, Report on the 1954 Annual Review – Greece, 20-November-1954.

<sup>338</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, pp.26-27.

the 1934 Balkan Pact which was essentially directed against Bulgarian revisionism. Despite the Greek-Turkish concurrent adherence to NATO and the placement of their forces under common NATO headquarters, their defence coordination did not seem initially possible. Turkey was reluctant to commit significant forces to Eastern Thrace, unless Yugoslavia would pledge to defend Yugoslav Macedonia, thus enabling the formation of a common front against Bulgaria. In 1952 the conditions were ripe for the initiation of military talks among the three states on a bilateral basis, while the conclusion of the first Balkan pact (the Ankara Treaty) in February 1953 paved the way for tripartite military talks and coordination of planning.<sup>339</sup>

Notwithstanding the above developments, in the short-term the Greek defence effort was undermined due to the country's inability to keep so many men under arms. In 1953, Greece was spending 6.5 per cent of GNP for military expenditure (53 percent of the country's budget was devoted to defence expenditures), and, though somewhat reduced in comparison to 1951 and 1952, the cost was huge for the second poorest NATO member.<sup>340</sup> When in opposition, Papagos had criticised the previous Centre government for its intention to reduce the strength of the army. Until the summer of 1953 his government insisted that the Greek forces would be maintained intact and if necessary even increased – a position which met with US approval. However, soon he had to acknowledge that Greece could not bear such a burden.<sup>341</sup> A disastrous earthquake which hit the Ionian Islands in August 1953 exacerbated the problem, while the Greek government was determined to pursue its public investment program to generate economic recovery. Furthermore, the service period in the Greek Armed forces was one of the longest in NATO (24 months for the Army and even

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<sup>339</sup> See for more, Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*.

<sup>340</sup> NATO/C-R(53)23, 24-April-1953; NATO/C-R(53)35, 15-April-1953.

<sup>341</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, pp.818, 822, 840; also Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, pp.26-27.

more for the Navy and Air Force) and posed further burdens on Greek economy and society.<sup>342</sup> Only additional US economic aid could solve the issue. Meanwhile, the deputy SACEUR, Field-Marshal Montgomery, visiting Greece in September 1953, implicitly advocated the reduction of the Greek Army to six divisions of full strength and the maintenance of a powerful, well trained reserve force. Other NATO officials like SACEUR Gruenther, and JUSMAGG, disapproved the prospect of such a radical reduction.<sup>343</sup> General Ridgway, Chief of Staff of the US Army and former SACEUR, pointed out that a reduction in the Greek Armed Forces programme would have wider implications, because it would have an adverse effect on NATO in general: it might 'initiate a downward revision in other member nations' forces'.<sup>344</sup>

The NATO force goals for the end of 1953 provided for an army of nine infantry divisions, one-third of an armoured division (equipped with the light tanks) six light infantry regiments at M-Day; at M+30 the infantry divisions would be risen to twelve. The Air Force would consist of 200 aircraft in December 1953 and 225 the following year. However, Greece was facing numerous problems regarding its defence effort. The NATO officials pointed out that there was inadequate training of reservists (their call-up was impossible due to the harsh financial situation of Greece in the post-Civil War period), lack of NCOs and other technically skilled specialists, and little and ineffective support units. Therefore, during 1953 a moderate reorganization of the Army was agreed and begun to be implemented, aiming at the actual reduction in the total number of combat units to enable the formation of support ones. Generally, there was a huge shortage of firepower both in terms of modern equipment and numbers. There were no medium or heavy tanks, almost no modern and heavy artillery, anti-

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<sup>342</sup> NATO/C-R(53)35, 15-April-1953.

<sup>343</sup> TNA/FO/371/108018/WU11922/2G, Athens to FO, 24-September-1953.

<sup>344</sup> NARA/RG59/UD50, Box 19, Ridgway Memorandum, 3-October-1953.

aircraft defence was very weak, warships were few and obsolete, and the modernisation of the air forces had just begun. Other major problems were the existence of a primordial air control and warning system, of antiquated airfields and other facilities, and of a general shortage of vehicles, equipment and electronics.<sup>345</sup> Essentially, though, the main Greek defence problem was the country's weak economy, which could not sustain the burden of the defence budget. Therefore, an effective programme of quick modernization and reform was out of question.

The situation in the Greek Navy was also very unpleasant and seemed to deteriorate. Greece is a maritime power and has hundreds of islands. Therefore, the role of the naval forces is crucial in any defence planning and effort. Even at a time, as in 1950s, when there could actually be no direct threat to the Greek islands, a relatively strong Navy was essential not only to support the Army but also to enable a smooth mobilization. However, the Greek Navy possessed few vessels -its main units were a cruiser, three destroyers and four submarines. Most importantly, many of them were obsolescent and were being maintained at a very low standard. The Greek authorities emphasized the importance of those ships and pointed out the need for their maintenance at affordable standards of readiness, although the Greek budget could not provide for their modest modernization. Consequently, the NATO authorities agreed to consider the issue.<sup>346</sup>

In 1953 the Greek Air Force was mostly comprised of Second World War piston-engine aircrafts, particularly Spitfires and Helldivers. By the end of 1953 six squadrons of *F-84* jets had arrived, while in 1954 the Greek Air Force also received *F-*

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<sup>345</sup> NATO/C-M(53)35, Annual Review – Greece, 15-April-1953; NATO/C-M(53)150, Report on Annual Review 1953 – Greece, 24-November-1953.

<sup>346</sup> NATO/C-M(53)35, Annual Review – Greece, 15-April-1953.

86s. On the one hand, a considerable effort was made to build new airports and facilities suitable for the operation of the jet planes, and there was also an increase in ground crews. On the other, there were still deficiencies in vehicles, refuelling units, electronics, operational reserves and spare parts.<sup>347</sup> Furthermore, training programmes were severely handicapped by lack of adequate facilities and equipment. No AC&W existed, but at least plans had been prepared (and approved by COMAIRSOUTH) for setting up such a system.<sup>348</sup>

The NATO International Staff made recommendations on the broader Greek defence problem in 1953, admitting that the Greek defence effort in relation to the country's GNP was among the largest of the NATO states. It also recognised that the Greek economy had been subjected to a continuous series of strains and therefore the NATO specialists did not wish to add further burden on Greece.<sup>349</sup> Although the monetary and financial reform initiated in spring 1953 proved successful, the situation remained delicate.<sup>350</sup> Therefore, the NATO authorities recommended the continuance of external financial assistance by the United States, since that help had been a *sine qua non* precondition for the maintenance of the Greek balance of payments; moreover, the US aid was expected to facilitate the Greek economic development which would enable, in the long run, Greece to bear unaided its own defence effort.<sup>351</sup>

Key figures of the Greek government initially indirectly, and then directly, raised the problem of the country's defence burden to US and NATO officials from the summer of 1953 onwards. By early 1954 the Greek leadership had concluded that

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid; see also, Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.27.

<sup>348</sup> NATO/C-M(53)150, Report on 1953 Annual Review – Greece, 24-November-1953.

<sup>349</sup> NATO/C-M(53)35, Annual Review – Greece, 15-April-1953.

<sup>350</sup> NATO/C-M(53)150, Report on 1953 Annual Review – Greece, 24-November-1953.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid; NATO/C-M(53)35, Annual Review – Greece, 15-April-1953.



the army strength could and should be reduced by 35,000 men, unless the Americans or NATO would pay to keep it intact. One could argue that to some extent, the tendency within the alliance itself was for smaller and better equipped land forces, and Papagos agreed to have the issue discussed in NATO. However, from late February until April 1954 the Greeks pressed the Americans to provide additional economic aid, but to no avail. Then, in early May 1954 Papagos decided unilaterally to reduce the strength of the army to 105,000 men; this decision was announced before the conclusion of the relevant NATO discussions. The Americans were embarrassed and taken aback, but the Greek Prime Minister made plain that if Washington did not provide additional help in 1955, he would then cut down the Greek land forces even more, to 70,000 men, claiming that this further reduction might be necessary to avoid financial collapse and meet NATO requirements on infrastructure works.<sup>352</sup> Meanwhile, the NATO specialists, after consultation with SACEUR, acquiesced to the army's reduction, but stressed that its mobilisation structure should not be destroyed. It was necessary to keep the active army at least at 105,000 men (comparing with the total of 133,900 on active duty in late 1953) to retain its ability to provide some defence of the Greek territory by mounting a delaying action. In addition, when possible, some increase was desirable to occur in the Navy and the Air Force.<sup>353</sup> Finally, the Americans agreed to grant additional funds of \$10 million and the army strength was maintained at 105,000 men.<sup>354</sup>

In late 1954 the NATO experts set as Greek priorities the enhancement of anti-aircraft defence, the development of training programmes for the reservists and the NCOs and the increase of ammunition and petroleum reserves in all the services.

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<sup>352</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, pp.859-60, 862-3; also Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, pp.28-31.

<sup>353</sup> NATO/C-M(54)100, Report on 1954 Annual Review – Greece, 20-November-1954.

<sup>354</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.31.

Moreover, the Staff called the Greek, NATO and US authorities involved to discuss and decide on the reorganization of the Greek Army and on force goal requirements for the Greek Navy. Finally, the NATO authorities emphasised the need for the establishment and maintenance of an effective AC&W system.<sup>355</sup>

Another development was the signature of a bilateral US-Greek agreement for the establishment of US bases (or ‘military facilities’) in Greece on 12 October 1953. The procedure was put in motion in the spring of 1953, when the Americans encouraged Greece to offer officially the use of its territory by US military forces. The Papagos government, which sought to strengthen US-Greek ties as a complementary move to Greek accession to NATO, responded quickly and asked President Eisenhower for the establishment of US bases in Greece. Moreover, he and his ministers were careful not to link that issue with Greek desire for the provision of additional economic help by the United States. When negotiations started in August 1953, it only took few weeks for the two parties to reach an agreement.<sup>356</sup>

According to the bilateral agreement, the Americans would construct and use military facilities utilized by US forces to implement NATO strategy. Thus virtually the sole restriction on the function of the US bases was that they should operate only within the NATO area and for NATO purposes. Other than that, US forces would be free to move on Greek soil, sail on territorial waters and fly in Greek airspace, while US personnel would enjoy extraterritoriality, meaning that they could not be tried and prosecuted in Greek courts of justice. Although a considerable imbalance existed, Greece wanted to grant the bases as a means to ensure US commitment in Greek

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<sup>355</sup> NATO/C-M(53)150, Report on 1953 Annual Review – Greece, 24-November-1953.

<sup>356</sup> NARA/RG59/711.56381/8-1453, Box 2913, Athens to State Department, 14-August-1953; also Stefanidis, *Asymmetroi Hetairoi*, pp.202-4.

defence in the event of Soviet-bloc invention, hoping that US personnel would act as a trip-wire mechanism. The US-Greek agreement provided for the construction of four major facilities (two for the USAF, in Hellenicon near Athens and in Herackeion, Crete, one in the Suda Bay, Crete, for the USAF and the USN, and one in Nea Makri near Athens for communications), plus other minor ones.<sup>357</sup> However, as we will discuss in the following chapter, the project of the establishment of a main NATO (and not US) base in the Aegean fell through.

As regards Turkey, it is only possible to give a rough estimation of Turkish potential and defence spending for that period, due to the lack of Turkish archival material and consequently of a substantial relevant bibliography. The force goals for the Turkish Army were 19 infantry divisions and 6/3 armoured divisions at December 1953, rising to 25 infantry divisions and two armoured divisions in 1954. The Turkish Air Force was estimated to possess 304 aircraft in late 1953, rising to 354 in 1954. It was also estimated that until late 1953 the Turkish Army would be capable of raising six more infantry divisions after M+30. In 1953-4 the Turkish defence expenditure appeared to be something less than 9 per cent of the country's GNP.<sup>358</sup>

The Turkish armed forces did not lack manpower, the defence budget was very high and the country's leadership had as top priority the enhancement of Turkish military capabilities (as will be shown, to serve wider political and geopolitical aims not only within NATO but also in the Middle East). Nevertheless, the Turkish military establishment suffered from various flaws. The Turkish military production capacity was very limited, and virtually the total of the equipment needed had to be obtained

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<sup>357</sup> Lagani, 'U.S. Forces in Greece in the 1950s', in Simon Duke and Wolfgang Krieger (eds.), *U.S. Military Forces in Europe: The Early Years* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), pp.309-30; Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, pp.31-33; Stefanidis, *Asymmetroi Hetairoi*, pp.226-7.

<sup>358</sup> NATO/C-M(53)35, Annual Review – Greece, 15-April-1953.

through end-item aid. In addition, much of the arms and material of the Turkish forces was either obsolete or obsolescent; thus an extensive programme of re-equipment was required and the only source of funding could be external (namely US) aid.<sup>359</sup> Indeed, although the US Ambassador to NATO, William Draper Jr., remarked that the SACEUR and the CINCSOUTH naturally were concerned with the Turkish military capabilities], he pointed out that any planning on the Turkish force levels would be performed between JAMMAT and Turkish officials, taking into account both Turkish capabilities and US ones to provide materiel. Therefore, on Turkish demands to receive more end-item aid from the 'pool of NATO equipment', the Americans made clear that Turkey should not expect any aid other than the US assistance programme carried out through JAMMAT.<sup>360</sup>

Another serious problem was the considerable shortfall of trained and skilled personnel to operate, but also maintain, current and future – more advanced – equipment. An equally critical deficiency was the shortage of NCOs. Therefore, the main problem and challenge of the Turkish Army was that of improving the quality of existing forces and particularly of the M-Day units.<sup>361</sup> To resolve those problems, the Turks established additional training camps and centres and commissioned increasing number of regular officers and NCOs. Therefore, the 1953 NATO Annual Review stated: 'if the personnel improvement programmes of the Turkish Army are fully realised by the end of 1953 Turkey should be militarily capable of operating and maintaining effectively by the end of 1953 the total amount of equipment required to meet the 1953 Army force goals [set] in this paper at the levels recommended by

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, pp.926-7.

<sup>361</sup> NATO/C-M(53)35, Annual Review – Turkey, 15-April-1953; NATO/C-M(53)150, Report on 1953 Annual Review – Turkey, 24-November-1953.

SHAPE'.<sup>362</sup> This fact – and the subsequent positive comment made by the International Staff – was not the usual case for the NATO members during this period. Therefore, the Turks believed that despite the Eisenhower administration's tendency to cut US aid to allied states, American help would continue to flow to their country. The reason for the above conviction was the Turkish impression that US aid to Turkey had shown more results than in the case of any other state which had received similar assistance.<sup>363</sup> This Turkish claim was not unjustifiable. Many US officials, particularly within the State and the Defense Department, considered since the late 1940s that 'funds spent to support the Turkish armed forces accomplished more than aid spent anywhere else'.<sup>364</sup>

Concerning the Turkish Air Force, the supply of the aircraft required to meet the NATO goals was being seemingly ensured by the delivery of end-item aid. Nevertheless, an effective training problem existed and was estimated that there was a shortfall of about 4.000 men. Besides this, the weak point of the Turkish Air Force was the inadequate AC&W system. The NATO military authorities were pressing for the establishment of a complete and fully operational AC&W system by 1955, while urgent steps had been taken to ensure efficient cover of important areas as early as 1954. The NATO planners stressed to the Turks the need to raise significantly the standard of the forces in being and make the necessary arrangements for ancillary facilities (ammunition reserves and POL, navigational aids, and instrument flying aids). Only then would further military equipment be granted.<sup>365</sup> Finally, as was the case for the Greek Navy as well, no force plan had been finalised for the Turkish

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<sup>362</sup> NATO/C-M(53)35, Annual Review – Turkey, 15-April-1953; *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, p.914.

<sup>363</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, p.935

<sup>364</sup> Quoted in Satterthwaite, 'The Truman Doctrine', pp.74-84. Satterthwaite was assigned to the State Department Near Eastern Division in 1945 and from July 1948 to July 1949 he was Director of NEA.

<sup>365</sup> NATO/C-M(53)35, Annual Review – Turkey, 15-April-1953.

Navy. Discussion with the NATO military authorities had not been concluded. The Turks insisted that the build-up or even maintenance of their naval forces needed for defence was impossible with national resources alone. NATO considered the reconditioning of certain old Turkish ships and, if possible, some reinforcement of the Turkish fleet, probably by the addition of torpedo boats.<sup>366</sup>

The Turkish defence effort represented a remarkable achievement for the country with the lowest standard of living within the alliance and the International Staff acknowledged that fact. A considerable strain was put on Turkey's financial stability and on the balance of payments by the burden of military expenditure and the internal investment programme. The allocation of additional funds to defence was inadvisable; the Turkish government had nevertheless planned on its own initiative an increase of about 30 per cent for 1953-54.<sup>367</sup> It is interesting that while the Turks appreciated the considerable US aid given until that point, by mid-1953 they tended to believe that although the NATO commanders favoured a significant increase in Turkish force levels, failure to implement this was caused mainly by US unwillingness to provide additional assistance.<sup>368</sup> As was often the case with Greece as well, the Turks seemed to fail to make a distinction between NATO and US views and took it for granted that these two were fully coordinated, which was not always the case, at least in regard to the Southern Flank. For their part, the NATO authorities suggested that the US authorities continued their financial assistance and end-item aid to Turkey,

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<sup>366</sup> Ibid; NATO/C-M(53)150, Report on 1953 Annual Review – Turkey, 24-November-1953.

<sup>367</sup> NATO/C-M(53)35, Annual Review – Turkey, 15-April-1953; NATO/C-M(53)150, Report on 1953 Annual Review – Turkey, 24-November-1953.

<sup>368</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, p.932.

which alone would enable those programmes to be fulfilled.<sup>369</sup> However this did not necessarily mean that the Americans would act on that recommendation.

By the end of 1954 Turkey had a substantial part of its Army and 439 aircraft on D-day under NATO command, although many of them were obsolete piston-engine aircraft of almost no value. At that point no Turkish naval forces were allocated to NATO in peacetime, but remained under national command. Although the Turks managed to make considerable progress in correcting shortages of technically trained personnel and in improving the training facilities of the military establishment, the level of equipment and operational reserves and the combat readiness remained inadequate and below NATO standards. Therefore, the military authorities of the alliance advised that the Turkish main effort should be directed towards the improvement of the status and readiness, effectiveness, and efficiency of the forces in being in all services and not towards the increase of the size of the Turkish Armed Forces, which was Ankara's wish. Until late 1954, the Turkish authorities had failed to meet the requirements of the qualitative standards of the Army units, which had been set as priority by the NATO officials a year before.<sup>370</sup>

The Turks agreed to defer the further build-up of the Army and Navy (original programmes provided for a sizeable build-up for which no known source of supply existed) but insisted on their plan for an increase of the Air Force. Indeed, Turkey was generally expected to meet the goals for 1954 and 1955 of 441 aircraft – although until 1955 obsolete Spitfires would remain in service – and the Turks were proposing a quite ambitious build-up: 540 aircraft in 1956, 630 in 1958 and 772 in 1960. Of course, such plans were not realistic. Substantial progress had been achieved

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<sup>369</sup> NATO/C-M(53)150, Report on 1953 Annual Review – Turkey, 24-November-1953.

<sup>370</sup> NATO/C-M(54)100, Report on 1954 Annual Review – Turkey, 20-November-1954.

in the Turkish Air Force in converting from piston-engine to jet type aircraft and in increasing the training status of the technical personnel and aircrews, but there still remained a lot to be done on that field. During the first six months of 1954, only 51 per cent of the aircraft on hand were in commission and just an average of 25 per cent was combat ready, while the minimum acceptable goal according to NATO standards was 70 per cent. The NATO specialists therefore emphasized to the Turks the need to raise the qualitative status of their air forces in being and to defer any expansion of the Air Force until 1955; and last but not least, the AC&W system had to be expanded.<sup>371</sup>

The wider political-economic situation remained more or less the same as in the previous years. Ankara directed its main defence effort to the build-up of the Army and the Air Force. It also sought to increase the defence budget for the next few years, but those plans were based on the continuation of US economic aid on a level of \$75 million per year. Turkish capacity to produce arms and munitions was very limited and the main mass of the Turkish defence expenditures (65 per cent of the total) related to personnel; another 15 per cent related to civilian public works, such as the development of the communications network. Therefore, the procurement of necessary equipment and ammunition was almost entirely depended on future MDAP programmes. A serious maintenance problem of equipment (especially aircraft) existed and foreign technical aid was requested for the training of manpower and for the construction of appropriate installations. Expenditure on military constructions was also very low, and the Turks claimed that certain projects (particularly naval bases),

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid.



which could not be undertaken due to lack of funds, should be financed under the NATO common infrastructure programme.<sup>372</sup>

The NATO officials also worried about the continuing disequilibrium in the Turkish balance of payments. They believed that large and expanding defence outlays combined with the pursuit of a vigorous investment programme would strain Turkish resources to the limit, notwithstanding continued foreign aid. Indeed, during 1954 the situation of the Turkish economy started to deteriorate, until it reached a breaking point in mid-1958. The International Staff set as immediate priorities for the Turkish Armed Forces the attainment of qualitative improvements of existing forces to reach the NATO standards. Care should be taken that the planned scale of the Turkish defence effort would not add to the strains of the Turkish economy.<sup>373</sup> However, during the following months the problem of the shortfall in the Turkish defence budget remained and immediate action was needed. The US Ambassador in Ankara, Avra Warren, urged his government in February 1954 that it stop dealing with the above issue on an 'annual ad hoc basis'. A viable, long-term solution should be found, and the Turks along with the Americans had to work together to devise a plan to enable the Turkish economy to become sound, so that military self-sufficiency could be attained 'at a prospective date'.<sup>374</sup>

In any case, at that point the Americans were fully aware that Turkey's defence effort placed a heavy strain upon its economy which could not yet support the military effort. Therefore, the provision of substantial US aid was necessary. Significantly, Washington intended to support Turkey to meet the NATO force goals,

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, pp.942, 949.

even by increasing the approved military assistance programme; this was a notable exception, given the trend of the Eisenhower administration to reduce foreign aid to most US allies. The US-Turkish cordial cooperation expanded on other fields, beyond the framework of NATO but not irrelevant to the mission and strategy of the alliance. One issue was that of the establishment of US military facilities – particularly for the SAC – on Turkish territory. The Turkish leadership, when approached by the Americans in early 1953, was very positive at the above prospect. The Americans preferred that any bilateral agreement should be kept secret to avoid a possible Soviet reaction.<sup>375</sup>

**iii) *The Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav Alliance: redressing the military balance in the Balkans***

While the three Southern Flank states were establishing their military and political stances, a new development on the Balkan frontier opened up a possibility for wider cooperation in the region. In the aftermath of the signature of the Treaty of Ankara the issue of the tripartite political and military collaboration was complicated by Stalin's death in March 1953 and the subsequent change of policy which was proclaimed by his successors (the policy of 'peaceful co-existence'). Athens and Ankara, which did not consider this new policy as 'sincere', were anxious that Tito might accept the conciliatory gestures of the new Soviet leadership or that the West might sacrifice the

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid, pp.913, 919

project of the Balkan Pact in exchange for gains elsewhere.<sup>376</sup> In any case, the prospects of further development of the Balkan accord remained unaffected. In June 1953 tripartite staff talks were resumed in Athens. During those long and detailed discussions, the defence of Thrace and Greek and Yugoslav Macedonia against attack by, or through, Bulgaria was the focal point. Ways and means of offering combined integrated resistance to any possible Soviet-bloc attack were assessed, while the possibility of the creation of a joint high command for the coordination of planning was briefly considered, but finally not adopted. Overall, substantial progress was made and general agreement was reached by the three delegations.<sup>377</sup> It should be stressed that Admiral Robert Carney, who had just been appointed CNO and was about to leave its post as CINCSOUTH, visited Athens and was kept informed about the content of tripartite talks. He gave some guidance to the Greeks and Turks, emphasising the necessity of close cooperation between NATO's Southern Flank and Yugoslavia.<sup>378</sup>

On 15-20 June the Greek Prime Minister, Field-Marshal Alexandros Papagos, and the Foreign Minister, Stefanos Stephanopoulos, visited Turkey to hold bilateral negotiations with their Turkish counterparts. During these talks it was decided that the time was not convenient for the conversion of the Ankara Treaty into a full military alliance.<sup>379</sup> Belgrade and Athens had just restored full diplomatic relations with the USSR, while the major NATO allies were reluctant to encourage a formal Balkan military alliance. The Greek and Turkish governments would support Yugoslav admission to NATO and continue cooperation with Yugoslavia, though not at a fast

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<sup>376</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.39.

<sup>377</sup> APA, File 29/1953, Greek Foreign Ministry to Washington, London, Paris, Rome, Greek delegation to NATO, No1262/NATO, 22-May-1953; also Iatrides, *BalkanTriangle*, p.119.

<sup>378</sup> *The Times*, 12-June-1953; *The New York Times*, 13-June-1953.

<sup>379</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, p.120.

pace. Soon afterwards, on 24 June 1953, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey issued an official joint communiqué, aiming to demonstrate that Soviet tactics in the aftermath of Stalin's death had in no way weakened the links formed by the Treaty of Ankara. At that point, maintaining international unity and collective defence arrangements remained vital.<sup>380</sup> NATO and the major western powers did not play any role to those developments, since they did not encourage the transformation of the Treaty of Ankara to a Balkan Alliance. Then, on 8-11 July 1953 the Balkan Pact Council of Foreign Ministers held its first meeting in Athens; they declared their will to continue their military cooperation and respond jointly to Soviet (or Soviet-bloc) peace overtures.<sup>381</sup>

Another parallel, but essentially separate process of bringing Yugoslavia closer to the western defence system was taking place. In late May 1953 the US, British and French representatives reached agreement on the resumption of tripartite-Yugoslav military talks 'on a covert basis'. SACEUR General Ridgway was consulted and his views were taken into consideration. Moreover, Ridgway was invited to send secretly to Washington American, British and French officers of his staff to advise the Tripartite Military Representatives on SACEUR's views. Nevertheless, those NATO officers would not attend the discussions themselves, while the Yugoslavs would not be informed of their presence.<sup>382</sup> It can be therefore argued that NATO was not completely and properly integrated to those talks.

On 16 July the United States, Britain and France invited Yugoslavia to send a military delegation to Washington to discuss various defence matters, including joint planning in the Balkans. The primary aim of that gesture was to consider ways to

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<sup>380</sup> NATO/C-R(53)32, 1-July-1953.

<sup>381</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, p.928; also Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.39.

<sup>382</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, pp.1353-4.

integrate Yugoslavia into Western defence planning and encourage Tito to reject the Soviet 'peace offensive'.<sup>383</sup> One could also justifiably assume that the three major NATO powers sought to regain the initiative, or at least considerable control, over Balkan defence developments.<sup>384</sup> The Yugoslavs sent a military delegation in late August, and another round of US-UK-French-Yugoslav military talks took place. Those talks' goal was to secure 'a closer integration of Yugoslav defence planning with Tripartite [US-UK-French], and ultimately NATO, defence planning for the south flank of NATO'. Some of the subjects discussed were strategic concepts, Yugoslav defence plans in the event of war, future action to be taken on planning and assistance required by the Yugoslavs. Among others, the representatives of the Standing Group countries recommended that arrangements should be made soon to enable appropriate NATO Commanders conduct operational discussions with the Yugoslav military.<sup>385</sup> Furthermore, on the one hand the US-UK-French representatives informed the Yugoslavs that the Standing Group countries considered the defence of Yugoslavia of great importance to the defence of South-eastern Europe; on the other, no political guarantees were given, and despite the exchange of information, no NATO plans were disclosed.<sup>386</sup> When the discussions were concluded, it was clear that Belgrade's admission to NATO was out of the question. However it was clear that the Yugoslavs favoured the coordination with NATO military planning.<sup>387</sup>

Then, in the autumn of 1953 the situation was further complicated, due to the exacerbation of the dispute over Trieste. The Americans judged that they had to make

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<sup>383</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, p.124.

<sup>384</sup> Stone, 'The Balkan Pact', pp.393-408.

<sup>385</sup> Declassified Documents Reference System (henceforth: DDRS) [e-source], CK3100418722, Joint Strategic Plans Group, Military Talks with Yugoslavia, 24-September-1953.

<sup>386</sup> APA, File 54III/1953, Athanasios Politis to Greek Foreign Ministry, No 4461, 31-October-1953; *FRUS*, 1952-54, vol.VIII, pp.854, 1354, 1356.

<sup>387</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, p.124.

a generous gesture to augment the Italian Christian-Democrats and the new Pella government. The United States and Britain decided to sideline the French and proceed alone. NATO (and even less Belgrade) had not been consulted or even informed about the US-UK decision to withdraw their troops from Trieste and hand control of zone A to the Italians. When the above intention was declared on 8 October 1953, Yugoslavia reacted vociferously: a solution which would favour one-sidedly Italy at Yugoslavia's expense could not be accepted.<sup>388</sup> Yugoslav troops were moved into position, while for some time Yugoslav-Greek-Turkish talks experienced a setback and the Yugoslav military reduced considerably the flow of information to their Greek and Turkish counterparts for fear it might reach the Italians via NATO.<sup>389</sup>

Furthermore, the crisis soon involved NATO. Belgrade warned that should Italian troops enter zone A, they would be attacked. Therefore, an issue arose if Italy would be entitled to invoke Articles 5 and 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty. All NATO members were clearly unwilling to be entangled in such a conflict, not least the United States and Britain who had sparked the crisis. Technically, though, Rome would be entitled to call for allied help in case of a Yugoslav attack against Italian troops due to a possible Italian stationing or advance in zone A. US-UK policy had backfired in a rather awkward manner. Suddenly NATO itself was in a collision course with Yugoslavia, a prospective valuable ally in the Balkans.<sup>390</sup> The situation remained tense until December 1953. The Americans and the British did not transfer administrative

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<sup>388</sup> Heinemann, 'The West and Yugoslavia', 1-19.

<sup>389</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, p.125.

<sup>390</sup> Heinemann, 'The West and Yugoslavia', pp.1-19.

control of Zone A to Italy, and in December both Yugoslavia and Italy withdrew their troops from the border.<sup>391</sup>

A corollary of the above crisis was a definite and distinct change of Tito's priorities: the Yugoslav leader sought to conclude a regional tripartite military pact as a means to enhance its leverage towards the West – and particularly Italy – as well as a means of protection against the Soviet bloc.<sup>392</sup> After some delay caused by the October crisis over Trieste, a third round of Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav staff talks took place from 10 to 20 November 1953, this time in Belgrade. The main topic was the preparation of a specific military plan for combined military action in case of aggression in the Balkans. Indeed, a tripartite emergency plan was adopted as a basic document, providing general directives for the coordination of Yugoslav, Greek, and Turkish land and air forces to defend Thrace and Macedonia; those directives would be supplemented in the future. It seems that the above general plan had previously been referred to CINCSOUTH, Admiral William Fichteler, by the Greeks, who were always anxious to keep informed the NATO and US officials.<sup>393</sup> The plan did not provide for automatic action (largely due to Greek unwillingness to accept an automatic guarantee, not least for fear that this might lead to the deterioration of Greek-Italian relations) and, for the time being, that plan was to remain an understanding among the three General Staffs.<sup>394</sup> Generally, Athens was quite reluctant to proceed with the establishment of a formal tripartite military alliance. Greece was the weakest country and apparently more sensitive than Turkey to Western

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<sup>391</sup> *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, p.1364.

<sup>392</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, p.125.

<sup>393</sup> *FRUS* 1952-54, VIII, pp.634-5, 861-2.

<sup>394</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, p.126.

reservations. In any case, one more significant step towards tripartite cooperation was achieved.

Tripartite military talks continued in early 1954. In early March 1954 the Chief of the General Staff of Yugoslav People's Army, General Peko Dapčević, paid an unofficial visit to Athens and met General Stelios Kitrilakis, Chief of the General Staff of National Defence. The two officers had an exchange of views while Kitrilakis made various proposals for future bilateral and/or tripartite collaboration, mainly on technical issues. Furthermore, the fourth round of tripartite staff talks was held in Ankara from 24 March to 1 April.<sup>395</sup> An attempt was made to improve the flow of information between Yugoslavia and Greece and Turkey, but only a partial solution was reached. NATO (namely, Greek and Turkish) and Yugoslav planning could be coordinated only after a lengthy and quite ineffective procedure of information exchange. This was compatible with NATO planning and function. In addition, other issues remained unsolved, notably that of a common supreme Balkan command to coordinate effectively tripartite planning. Despite constant proposals of the Greek military to establish a supreme command, the Yugoslavs refused, arguing that such measure would place indirectly their armed forces under NATO.<sup>396</sup>

Therefore, Belgrade's position remained flexible, pursuing the establishment of a formal tripartite military alliance which would not be closely associated with NATO. Soon the Yugoslav leadership assumed the initiative. Tito and Popović visited Ankara in mid-April 1954. On 15 April the Yugoslav and Turkish leaders declared

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<sup>395</sup> Theodora Gkota, *Psychropolemiki Pragmatikotita kai Perifereiakes Sheseis: Ellada, Yugoslavia, Tourkia: Synapsi kai Apodynamosi ton Valkanikon Symfonon* [Cold War Reality and Regional Relations: Greece, Yugoslavia, Turkey, 1950-1955: Conclusion and Emasculation of the Balkan Pacts], Unpublished PhD thesis, (University of Athens: Athens, 2008), pp.145-6. Gkota's work is valuable because she carried out research in the Yugoslav archives.

<sup>396</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, pp.126-7.



their intention to transform the tripartite treaty of collaboration into a formal binding military alliance containing 'mutual military obligations'.<sup>397</sup> Athens was not only surprised and embarrassed (since it had not been previously consulted), but was also 'shocked and hurt': the impression had been created that Greece played no part in the decision to conclude a military alliance and that Greece would be only a junior partner in such a pact. The Greek political and military leadership felt resentment particularly against the Turks. Although Greece was placing much more emphasis in developing military cooperation with Yugoslavia, it had also been more apprehensive about US, Italian and NATO doubts and concerns and had not pressed for an early conclusion of a tripartite military alliance. Turkish tactics however made Greece appear less friendly to Yugoslavia.<sup>398</sup>

Still, once the announcement had been made, the Greeks decided that they had no other option but to go along with the idea of a military pact. Therefore, the above incident could not impair either Greek-Turkish relations or the prospects of the signature of a military alliance. Meanwhile, the three Standing Group powers were alarmed at a possible provision of the prospective Balkan alliance for automatic mutual assistance in case of war. The obvious Italian reactions and possible strong reservations expressed by other NATO members, particularly the Scandinavian states but also Portugal and the Benelux countries, would have to be taken into account. Those countries did not wish to become entangled in a crisis or war in South-eastern Europe and also viewed that Yugoslavia could not be trusted to behave sensibly.<sup>399</sup> Their reactions could vary from objecting to the conduct of any planning between

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<sup>397</sup> *New York Times*, 16-April-1954.

<sup>398</sup> *FRUS* 1952-54, VIII, pp.642-3; also Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, p.129.

<sup>399</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/53, COS(54)177, 1-June-1954; TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/2G, Summary of US-UK-French meeting on the Balkan Alliance, 12-June-1954.

NATO commanders and the Yugoslav military to declaring that an attack on Greece and Turkey triggered by the workings of the Balkan alliance would not constitute a *casus foederis* for the invocation of article 5 of the NAT. Of course, such an action would severely undermine NATO's cohesion and credibility. The Americans, the British and the French acknowledged that in fact any Soviet-bloc attack on Yugoslavia would probably spark a general conflict.<sup>400</sup>

The Standing Group powers worried that if the prospective Balkan alliance provided for a 'full' automatic guarantee, then Yugoslavia might be given the benefit of receiving implicit NATO commitments for its defence, without undertaking a commensurate obligation towards Greece and Turkey in the event of becoming belligerents as a result of their membership to NATO. Nevertheless, it was understood that if automatic action under the Balkan alliance was limited to an attack on one or more of the three countries by, or through, Bulgaria, the extension of NATO's commitments would not be great and would not justify a request to Yugoslavia to assume far-reaching reciprocal obligations, especially as regards the Ljubljana Gap.<sup>401</sup> The allies and the Americans in particular believed that the conclusion of the Balkan alliance was inevitable. Nevertheless, they tried to slow the process and gain some control of the situation without much success.

Indeed, the Greek and Yugoslav governments brushed aside requests by the United States, France, West Germany and Italy to delay the signature of an alliance.<sup>402</sup> Meanwhile, in June a tripartite US-UK-French Balkan Alliance Group was formed and held in London. The Standing Group powers acknowledged that a Balkan alliance, if

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<sup>400</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/53, COS(54)177, 1-June-1954.

<sup>401</sup> TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/2G, Summary of US-UK-French meeting on the Balkan Alliance, 12-June-1954.

<sup>402</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, pp.40-41.

certain requirements were fulfilled, would considerably strengthen the defence of the West. The Americans considered that NATO's approval of such an alliance was highly desirable, and therefore wanted the Greeks and Turks to inform NATO of the terms of the proposed alliance sufficiently in advance of the signature of the treaty.<sup>403</sup> The British recognised that despite possible complications, it was to the advantage of the West to bring Yugoslavia into the Western camp, and a Balkan military alliance would serve that end. Any Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav military accord should nevertheless be in conformity with NATO planning for South-eastern Europe.<sup>404</sup> At the political level, it was essential that the other NATO members should not be faced with a *fait accompli*, but at least 'an appearance of consultation' should take place.<sup>405</sup> Finally, the British believed that coordination between the Balkan alliance and NATO should be created by a step by step process. For their part, the French indicated they would favour a rapid conclusion of such an arrangement, rather than a gradual procedure.<sup>406</sup>

At any rate, in late June Dulles acknowledged that in essence, a Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav alliance had become inevitable, and in any case a Balkan military alliance would serve US and NATO interests, so long as it would not cause conflict with the latter. Therefore, the State Department discouraged the application of UK and French pressure to the Greeks and the Turks, arguing that any US-UK-French or UK-French move would probably turn unproductive: the Greeks and the Turks knew their responsibilities with respect to NATO, while the Standing Group countries ought to wait until they would be able to make coordinated and concrete suggestions 'based on

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<sup>403</sup> NARA/RG59/A1-1289, Box 2, 18-June-1954

<sup>404</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/53, COS(54)196, 15-June-1954.

<sup>405</sup> TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/5G, FO to Ankara No.409, 25-June-1954.

<sup>406</sup> NARA/RG59/A1-1289, Box 2, 18-June-1954.

knowledge of proposed terms of alliance'.<sup>407</sup> Therefore, by late June-early July the three Standing Group powers had accepted that the conclusion of a Balkan military alliance was imminent. Their goal was to ensure that the above alliance would be accepted by Italy and the junior NATO allies; to that end some lobbying to achieve a consensus of opinion to the NAC should be done by the Greeks and Turks (with discreet US, UK and French support). Moreover the Balkan alliance should make 'a positive contribution to the political unity and military strength of the West' through practical cooperation with NATO.<sup>408</sup> However, the three major western powers did not hold identical views: the Americans were deeply concerned about the provision of an automatic action in case of Soviet aggression against one or more of the signatories. The British acknowledged the risk inherent in accepting automatic guarantee to Yugoslavia, but argued that since the West sought to forge links with Belgrade, any objection of principle to some automatic action would prove counterproductive; such action should nevertheless fit to NATO plans. For their part, the French were more interested in developing political, rather than military links between NATO and Yugoslavia. They also worried that Greek and Turkish commitments to Yugoslavia were asymmetrical.<sup>409</sup>

Meanwhile, a series of developments taking place in the Balkans rather than in Washington, London and Paris led to the final conclusion of the Balkan Alliance. Tito visited Athens in early June and found himself in agreement with Papagos on the basic issues of a military accord. Upon Tito's return to Belgrade, Adnan Menderes, accompanied by the Foreign and Defence Ministers Fuat Köprülü and Ethem

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<sup>407</sup> *FRUS* 1952-54, VIII, pp. 644-6, 652-3, 656; TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/6G, Summary of US-UK-French meeting on the Balkan Alliance, 25-June-1954.

<sup>408</sup> TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/23G, FO to Ankara No.445, 12-July-1954; TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/14G, UK delegation to NATO to FO, 30-June-1954.

<sup>409</sup> TNA/FO/371/WU1073/17G, Hood to Western & Southern Departments, 9-July-1954.

Menderes, flew from Washington directly to Athens (in CINCSOUTH Fechteler's private aircraft). The Greek and Turkish leaders tried to coordinate their policy taking into account their NATO membership and obligations, particularly regarding the issue of the guarantee. Both Athens and Ankara were aware of US preferences. Another aspect should be also noted: Papagos tried to raise the Cyprus issue (the Greek Prime Minister had already decided to appeal to the UN against the British), but the Turks refused to discuss the matter.<sup>410</sup>

Soon afterwards, the three governments decided to set up a committee composed of diplomatic and military experts to draft the military pact. The three parties agreed to reach a new military agreement, which would be supplementary to, but independent of the Ankara Treaty.<sup>411</sup> At that point, the nature of the guarantee given and the commitment undertaken by the three signatories had to be decided.<sup>412</sup> Yugoslavia insisted on the adoption of an automatic guarantee against any aggressor, while the Greeks favoured the adoption of an automatic guarantee only against Bulgarian aggression; in the event of aggression from the USSR or another satellite, the three allies would consult and react accordingly. The Yugoslavs and the Turks rejected the Greek proposal, justifiably claiming that such a formula would emasculate the alliance.<sup>413</sup> It should be noted that the provision of an automatic guarantee against Bulgarian aggression constituted the most realistic option, since Bulgaria was the only Soviet-bloc which bordered with all three states and a traditional common enemy. However, even such a quite limited provision for automatic military reaction

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<sup>410</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, pp.40-41; *The Times*, 8-June-1954.

<sup>411</sup> Gkota, *Psychropolemiki Pragmatikotita* p.167.

<sup>412</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, p.130.

<sup>413</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.41.

contradicted, at least if seen in a legal rather than strategic context, Greek and Turkish obligations to NATO.

Negotiations continued during June and July. Greece and Turkey were in close contact with US and NATO officials. The Greeks in particular were very receptive of US-UK-French points and eager to inform the major allies of any developments on the Balkan negotiations.<sup>414</sup> Initially Athens and Ankara sought to avoid any binding commitment to assist Yugoslavia if attacked by a Soviet satellite, unless they would have first secured full NATO support, but soon accepted a provision which, according to the Standing Group powers contained a tight commitment for automatic action. Therefore, the need for coordination of tripartite Balkan and NATO planning was imperative, because NATO would extend indirectly its commitment to Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the Greeks tried to persuade the Yugoslavs to accept the principle of automatic assistance in case of Greek and Turkish involvement in a war by virtue of their NATO obligations.<sup>415</sup> However, the Yugoslavs abruptly rejected the Greek proposal (which had Turkish support) stating that no such Yugoslav guarantee 'was acceptable or even necessary'.<sup>416</sup> If such guarantee were provided, Belgrade would undertake all responsibilities of a NATO member, without enjoying any advantages: in essence, Yugoslavia would be obliged to declare war in case of Soviet aggression against any NATO member which would activate article 5 of the NAT, while it would not have any say in the NATO decision making process and could realistically expect Greek-Turkish support only in case of Bulgarian attack.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/14G, UK Delegation to NATO to FO, 30-June-1954; TNA/FO/371/113222/ WU1073/17G, Athens to FO No.329, 8-July-1954.

<sup>415</sup> TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/15G, Athens to FO No.260, 30-June-1954; TNA/FO/371/WU1073/17G, Hood to Western & Southern Department, 9-July-1954.

<sup>416</sup> TNA/FO/371/WU1073/16G, Athens to FO No.266, 3-July-1954.

<sup>417</sup> Gkota, *Psychropolemiki Pragmatikotita*, pp.171.

Furthermore, the Yugoslavs stiffly refused to include an article in the treaty providing for cooperation with NATO. This was the most unsatisfactory feature of the prospective alliance. Although Western officials understood the Yugoslav will to avoid any hint of becoming subordinate to NATO, persistence to reject the principle of cooperation with NATO was not only illogical from the military point of view, but also likely to backfire at the discussion in NAC. Clearly, due to Greek and Turkish obligations to NATO, no effective assistance could be given to Yugoslavia, unless NATO and the Balkan alliance would be able to work together successfully; to that end, coordination of plans was necessary.<sup>418</sup> In any case, upon Yugoslav insistence the Greek-Turkish side soon had to drop the suggestion for the provision of official NATO-Balkan alliance cooperation. For their part, the Yugoslavs reassured Athens and Ankara that when the time came, some sort of NATO-Balkan pact unofficial or 'backdoor' military talks should take place to achieve some coordination, without provoking the Soviet bloc.<sup>419</sup>

In early July, the Standing Group powers made a last effort to slow the process for some weeks, in an attempt to give more time for consultation among the NATO allies. Rome also clearly indicated it would accept more easily a Balkan alliance if the latter were signed after, and not before, a solution of the Trieste issue, and urged Washington and London to use their influence with the Greeks and the Turks in that sense.<sup>420</sup> The Turks initially made plain that there was no question of postponing the final conclusion of the Balkan alliance.<sup>421</sup> However, and at a time when everyone expected that the signature of the alliance was imminent, Ankara proposed to

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<sup>418</sup> TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/23G, FO to Ankara No.446, 12-July-1954.

<sup>419</sup> TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/27G, Ankara to FO No.329, 14-July-1954; also Gkota, pp.171-2.

<sup>420</sup> TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/17G, FO to Athens No.329, 8-July-1954.

<sup>421</sup> TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/23/G, Ankara to FO No.322, 10-July-1954.

delay the final conclusion of the pact to allow Italy to become a founding member of the Balkan alliance. This ill-advised Turkish initiative enraged the Yugoslavs, whose suspicion towards Italy and the major western powers was exacerbated. For some days, the Yugoslavs believed that the Turks (and possibly the Greeks), were ‘not playing straight’, attempting to involve the tripartite negotiations with the Trieste issue. The Greeks were also very annoyed since, once again, they had not been previously consulted or even informed by the Turks, and tried to calm the Yugoslavs. Athens even hinted that should the tripartite negotiations eventually collapse, it would seek to conclude a bilateral military agreement with Belgrade.<sup>422</sup> On 15 July Papagos sent letters to Tito and Menderes and publicly urged for the signature of the Treaty of Alliance as soon as possible.

Finally, the situation was eased very soon, since it was more a misunderstanding rather than a real issue: Turkey did not mean to cause any problems for the negotiations, but had only tried to ensure that the Balkan Alliance would be received favourably by Italy and NATO; particularly since the Americans had underlined a month ago that the value of a Balkan military alliance would have been much greater if the Trieste issue had been settled previously. However, the Standing Group powers and Ankara acknowledged that even if Italian-Yugoslav relations had been cordial, at that stage it would have been impossible to bring Italy in the alliance as a founding member.<sup>423</sup> Therefore, the road for the signature of the Balkan Alliance was opened. Meanwhile, Yugoslavia had accepted an amendment to Article 2 of the Treaty: it did not provide for an automatic guarantee in case of attack, but provided for consultation between the three states before they would commit their armed forces.

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<sup>422</sup> TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/28G, Athens to FO no.285, 15-July-1954; also Hatzivassiliou, p.41.

<sup>423</sup> TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/34G, FO to Ankara No.461, 19-July-1954; *FRUS*, 1953-54, VIII, pp.666-7, 948.



The above amendment satisfied the Americans, the British and the French, and ensured that the treaty was approved by the NAC, on 29 July.<sup>424</sup>

Therefore, on 9 August 1954 the Treaty of Alliance, Political Co-operation and Mutual Assistance was signed in Bled, Yugoslavia, by the three Foreign Ministers (and became known as the Treaty of Bled). The primary aim of the new treaty was to safeguard the political independence and territorial integrity of the three signatories. In an attempt to allay Bulgarian, Soviet, and even Italian fears, it was declared that the pact might prove 'beneficial' for those countries of the region which were similarly dedicated to the 'cause of a just peace'.<sup>425</sup> Whatever those declarations and the evasive wording of the treaty regarding the issue of common reaction in case of external aggression, the Bled Treaty was important for regional balances. Albania became completely isolated; Bulgaria was militarily in a disadvantage; and tripartite Balkan military cooperation could offer chances of effective defence of Greek and Turkish Thrace, mitigating to some extent the lack of a NATO forward defence in the region. Most importantly, the Soviets would have to undertake a major campaign and commit significant land and air forces if they wanted to advance to the Western and Southern Balkans in the event of local or general war. This was crucial in the context of the new NATO strategy (as finally envisaged in MC.48): as the Soviet bloc would now have to concentrate significant forces (since a surprise attack with inadequate forces would not suffice any more), valuable warning time would be offered to Greece and Turkey to mobilise their reserves. Of equal importance, NATO and the United States would be given the time and chance to launch tactical nuclear weapons against enemy

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<sup>424</sup> TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/27G, Ankara to FO No.329, 14-July-1954; TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/34G, FO to Ankara No.461, 19-July-1954. For the NAC discussion and approval, see *FRUS* 1953-54, VIII, pp.671-3

<sup>425</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, pp.137-8.

formations at a very early stage of the campaign, and not deep on Greek and Turkish territory.

As regards the extent to which the Balkan pact was in conformity with NATO, one can compare Yugoslavia's position and strategic value to the Southern Flank with that of Sweden, a non-NATO member, to the Northern Flank. The latter, the British commented, had 'not plucked up enough courage to have an alliance'. However, it was acknowledged that if Sweden were attacked, Norway and Denmark would certainly want to assist it and would expect NATO to follow.<sup>426</sup> Yugoslavia was much more important for the defence of the NATO area, because it could contribute significantly to the defence of the Southern Flank, both on the Italian and the Balkan front.

Nevertheless, it is true that the thorny issue of the cooperation and planning coordination between NATO (SHAPE, AFSOUTH or HALFSEE) and the Balkan alliance remained unsolved. Before the conclusion of the latter, US and British policy makers had justifiably claimed that the Balkan alliance should add something more than 'merely not conflict with NATO', but 'make a positive contribution to the political unity and military strength of the West'.<sup>427</sup> In mid-September 1954, the deputy SACEUR, Field Marshal Lord Montgomery, paid a brief 'private' visit in Yugoslavia to meet Tito. Montgomery publicly dismissed suggestions that his intention was to confer with the Yugoslav leadership on defence arrangements between Belgrade and the West and emphasized the private nature of his visit. However, he had been authorized by the COS (and possibly NATO) to persuade Tito

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<sup>426</sup> TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/14G, UK Delegation to NATO to FO, 30-June-1954.

<sup>427</sup> TNA/FO/371/113222/WU1073/23G, FO to Ankara No.445, 12-July-1954; *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, p.661.

that political disagreement with Italy should not defer progress towards the coordination of military planning between Yugoslavia and the Balkan alliance and NATO.<sup>428</sup>

At any rate, despite the conclusion of the Balkan alliance in August 1954, very little effective cooperation with NATO on military or other matters had taken place by late 1954. Not even the three Standing Group countries could agree on specific military arrangements between NATO and the Balkan alliance to tie sufficiently Yugoslavia with the Western defence establishment. Washington, London and Paris agreed only on generalities but could not devise a concrete policy: their military interest lay chiefly in the defence of Northern Yugoslavia to cover Italy (and not to the defence of Thrace and Greek Macedonia), and their aim could be best served by direct planning with Yugoslavia rather than by coordination of plans through the Balkan alliance. Things were further complicated due to the continuation of Italian-Yugoslav hostility: the British argued that NATO-Yugoslav cooperation should initially take place via SACEUR, and only at a later stage with CINCSOUTH and CINCAFMED who were the local commanders and thus the most appropriate for that duty, but whose staffs included many Italian officers. Another problem which had to be addressed was the formulation of a common plan for the supply of military aid to Belgrade.<sup>429</sup>

However, Tito proved reluctant to proceed with actual cooperation and coordination of planning with NATO. Therefore, it can be argued that from Yugoslavia's perspective, the conclusion of the Bled Treaty was possibly a manoeuvre to enhance its leverage vis-à-vis Italy, NATO, and the Soviet bloc, as well as a means

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<sup>428</sup> TNA/DEFE/4/72, COS(54)99<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 15-September-1954; also *The Times*, 17-September-1954.

<sup>429</sup> TNA/FO/371/113221/WU1072/99/G, Report on the NAC Ministerial Meeting, 15-December-1954.

to bolster its defence against Soviet aggression, an indeed constantly diminishing threat from mid-1953 onwards.

### ***Conclusion***

During 1952-54 the pattern of NATO strategy for the defence of the Southern Flank was finalised. However, this strategy was quite contradictory. Official NATO strategy as early as 1952 envisaged that ‘full advantage must be taken of the special opportunities which exist in Southern Europe for conducting an aggressive defence’, one of the main assets being ‘the existence of an important mass of Greek-Turkish forces on the spot’.<sup>430</sup> However Greece and, partly, Turkey were considered as capable of mounting only limited defence of their own territories against Soviet-bloc invasion, while ‘aggressive’ or forward defence, was more wishful thinking rather than a realistic option.

At least until after the mid-1950s, even the actual military value of the tactical nuclear weapons in defending the Southern Flank, was highly questionable. No nuclearization of Italian, Greek and Turkish forces occurred during this period, and the only powerful nuclear element in the region was the Sixth Fleet and the relatively few US aircraft operating from US bases, which obviously would not be able to support effectively land, air, naval and amphibious campaigns in the three different frontiers of the Southern Flank. In addition, heavy reliance on nuclear weapons for the defence of the area in case of war would most likely lead to a nuclear holocaust: not only would

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<sup>430</sup> NATO/M.C.14/1(Final), Report on Strategic Guidance, 9-December-1952.

the Soviets retaliate, but at least as regards the campaigns in Greece and Turkey, part of allied nuclear bombing would take place on Greek and Turkish soil. Therefore, it can be argued that the main usefulness of overreliance on tactical nuclear weapons was their obvious deterrent effect to the Soviets, rather than their military utility.

After the conclusion of the Balkan Alliance which redressed the regional correlation of power in favour of the West, NATO and the United States could have sought to enhance their forces in the region so as to build a position of strength able to deter or withstand Soviet bloc aggression and, equally important, to threaten the flank and rear of any Soviet major campaign against Western Europe and the Middle East. However, due to the lack of adequate forces no action to that direction was undertaken, and thus CINCSOUTH's top priority remained the control and command of the Eastern Mediterranean. Therefore, the main responsibility for overall defence of the area had rested mostly, if not exclusively, on the general US nuclear deterrent, and particularly on the US Sixth Fleet. Consequently, in case of conflict in the Southern Flank region, NATO ground forces would be limited to Greek and Turkish troops without any other NATO contribution to the land campaign – at least at the crucial early phase – while the air forces would also be inadequate. NATO leaders evidently were reluctant to reinforce the flank in the event of crisis or war because that would have led to an emasculation of the defence of the Central region of the Alliance.<sup>431</sup> Therefore, the alliance did not provide Greece and Turkey with any realistic possibilities for effective defence against Soviet-bloc aggression if deterrence failed, and to a lesser extent the same applied for the Italian case as well.

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<sup>431</sup> Jed Snyder, *Defending the Fringe: NATO, the Mediterranean, and the Persian Gulf* (Boulder & London: Westview Press, 1987), pp.3-4, 6.

However, the tripartite Greek-Yugoslav-Turkish cooperation greatly enhanced the Greek, and to some extent, the Turkish defence situation. This finally led to the conclusion of a military alliance, indirectly linking, though not integrating, Yugoslavia with the Western defence system. The Balkan alliance redressed the regional balance, led to the creation of a continuous and solid front in the Balkan Peninsula, completely cut off Albania, brought Bulgaria in a difficult position, and made the application of forward defence possible. Of course, the Balkan Pacts had also significant flaws: Italian-Yugoslav relations remained hostile; the major western powers failed to coordinate their concurrent but distinct military talks with Yugoslavia with the ones held by the Balkan countries; they also frustrated Tito due to their policy on Trieste; and the Yugoslavs refused the establishment of any link between the Balkan Alliance and NATO, which inevitably reduced the effectiveness of the former. Moreover, Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia managed to cooperate and form an alliance so long as the Soviet threat was acute and seemed imminent. As the international and regional environment changed after the summer of 1954, their rapprochement proved short-lived and ill-fated, in spite of the fact that, ironically, Italian-Yugoslav relations were restored in late 1954. Those flaws notwithstanding, the conclusion of the Balkan alliance was a major military asset for the West and its three signatories. Never before or after 1954, was the Southern Flank of NATO so strong.

NATO and the major western powers did not oppose the establishment of close and formal tripartite military bonds, despite fears about possible tangles particularly with regard to Italy. Eventually, they played a secondary role. Initiative lay on Athens, Ankara, and Belgrade. Of course, NATO offered an appropriate environment for the furtherance of Greek-Turkish cooperation, while both countries

kept their allies informed on Balkan developments to ensure that the latter would be in conformity with NATO. Moreover, Greek and Turkish participation into NATO arguably made them more valuable allies for Yugoslavia. In any case, it can be argued that the alliance proved more able, and perhaps willing, to act as a political stabilising factor, enhance the international standing of the Southern Flank members, and protect the Southern Flank by extending the US nuclear deterrence, rather than provide the means necessary to mount an effective defence should war actually erupt.

Finally, a quick reference can be made to the Middle East defence situation. Even when the MEDO project was terminated in 1953 and in 1954 the procedure for the establishment of the Baghdad Pact was set in motion, the latter was not linked, even indirectly, with the Southern Flank of NATO. Once more no coordination of planning between (American) NATO commanders and the British Cs-in-C, Middle East, proved feasible. From now on, US and UK strategies on the Middle East became completely independent from NATO politics and strategy. The pursuit of 'political stability in depth' in the Middle East proved even more unsuccessful than that of a regional defence scheme. Therefore, as analysed in subsequent chapters, during the following years the Soviets were able to take advantage of the power vacuum in the area and extend gradually their activity there, posing a steadily increasing threat to the Southern Flank's right flank.

#### **4. THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE SOUTH-EASTERN FRONTIER, AUTUMN 1954 - SUMMER 1956**

Almost immediately after the adoption of the M.C.48 document in November 1954 which provided for high reliance in US nuclear retaliatory capacity, doubts were raised, particularly by the European allies, over the wisdom of the new NATO strategy. There were growing concerns about such issues as the usefulness of tactical nuclear weapons on the battlefield and the approaching strategic parity between the two superpowers; the latter would inevitably undermine the credibility of US nuclear deterrence and commitment to its European allies. Furthermore, very soon it became apparent that the new NATO strategy offered little relief to national budgets, since it did not contemplate any significant reduction to existing force levels (but only to reserve ones, or to forces that were to be formed in the future). Consequently, by late 1955 it was evident that the Western Europeans (with the exception of West Germany, which joined NATO in May 1955 and started to rearm) were reluctant to maintain their defence expenditures at existing levels to raise their conventional forces as envisaged in MC.48. This attitude stemmed from the ‘Geneva spirit’ of 1955 which brought hope for an ease in Cold War tensions, and from Khrushchev’s decision for a unilateral reduction in Soviet conventional forces, which led to a relative soothing of the perception of threat in Western Europe.<sup>432</sup>

Concurrently, the European allies started from autumn 1955 onwards to press the United States to provide them with tactical nuclear weapons. This development

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<sup>432</sup> Duffield, *Power Rules*, pp.117-20.



was not unexpected, since NATO strategy placed so great emphasis on nuclear deterrence and called for the build-up of forces with integrated atomic capability. However, only the US forces in Europe had such capability, and the Americans remained unwilling for some time to provide tactical nuclear weapons to their allies. They feared that the West Europeans would defer their conventional rearmament effort, particularly since Washington and the SACEUR were pressing their allies to increase their defence budgets and reinforce their conventional forces, while the United States itself was clearly reluctant to do the same.<sup>433</sup> In addition, nuclear sharing was precluded by the McMahon Act of 1946, and despite its modification in 1954, the dominant interpretation of the Act remained that US nuclear weapons and forces could not be controlled by non-US commanders.

As regards the Southern Flank, Greek-Turkish relations deteriorated significantly after the violent disturbances in Istanbul and Izmir – against the Greek minority, and the Greek officers serving in HALFSEE, respectively. That rupture soon slid into an open dispute between the Greeks, the Turks, and the British, as the Cyprus crisis was exacerbated further, and proved to be the key development during that period. During 1956-58 there were occasions when the two states considered that a war between them was not improbable; however, it is difficult to claim that they reached the brink of armed conflict during the second half of the 1950s: Turkey verbally threatened Greece for the first time in the summer of 1956, but as analysed below neither the Turks nor the Greeks had the means to conduct successfully military operations against the other. In addition, as the defence posture of the Southern Flank remained weak, the Soviet and the Bulgarian threat could not be

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid, pp.119-20; ‘Gruenther’, pp.53-72.

overlooked, at a period when the Balkan Alliance had been virtually dissolved, while Greek-Bulgarian and Turkish-Bulgarian relations remained strained.

Nevertheless, the Greek-Turkish rupture of the mid-1950s should not be underestimated: the traditional mutual distrust and enmity was revived and military cooperation between the Greeks and the Turks, either within the framework of the Balkan Alliance or NATO, was suspended. This development came as a severe blow to the defence posture of the West in the area. From 1946-7 onwards, Greece and Turkey were regarded as a strategic whole and this was the reason why both were admitted to NATO simultaneously. Thus, from the beginning of the Cold War Western strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean depended heavily on two pillars: close Greek-Turkish political and military links and Anglo-American cooperation. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the latter was not without strains, and US-UK relations reached their lowest ebb upon the outbreak of the Suez Crisis in the autumn of 1956. However, that 'special relationship' was restored very quickly, while Greek-Turkish relations never returned to full normalcy, let alone to the cordial cooperation of the early 1950s. Furthermore, tripartite political and military cooperation in the Balkans was also terminated, not only due to the Greek-Turkish crisis but also because the Soviet openings to Yugoslavia in the post-Stalin era succeeded in 1955. Last but not least, both Belgrade and Athens disagreed with Ankara on other issues, such as Turkey's Middle Eastern policy. Indeed, the Balkan Alliance was virtually dissolved and tended to be substituted by a bilateral, but rather loose, Greek-Yugoslav military cooperation.

NATO's failure to mediate between Greece and Turkey led to the first manifestation of discord within the alliance. Furthermore, circumstances demanded a

persistent and firm intervention of both NATO and Washington for the resolution of the Cyprus issue to break the stalemate and restore stability in Eastern Mediterranean. Nevertheless, no such initiative came and NATO proved unable to solve intra-allied disputes which could even lead to open conflict between member-states. The NATO allies did not manage to expand the scope of the organization from a purely military alliance dealing with an external threat, to a multilateral forum of political discussion and crisis management. No appropriate mechanisms were devised to prevent future crises and ruptures on issues like the situation in the Middle East, nuclear strategy and sharing, and, increasingly, Greek-Turkish antagonism.

Therefore, this chapter aims to show how several factors, intra-allied and 'out-of-area', as well as political and military ones, intertwined from late 1954 to mid-1956 to emasculate the Southern Flank (and mainly the Balkan and eastern frontiers), which had reached its peak in 1953-4. It will be also argued that the UK-Greek and, especially, the Greek-Turkish dispute over Cyprus demonstrated early on in NATO's history (well before the crises over Suez and De Gaulle's challenge) the Alliance's inherent weaknesses on the political level. NATO historians have not dealt thoroughly with the fact that the Cyprus issue caused the first serious intra-allied crisis. Moreover, while historians have written about the Cyprus issue, the Italian or Greek defence problems, developments in the Middle East and Yugoslav position after 1954, no comprehensive work exist on their combined influence on the Southern Flank posture. Furthermore, once again emphasis is also given on the Southern Flank as a defensive strategy, which is virtually absent from historiography.

**i) *The Balkan Pact in decay: the eruption of the Cyprus dispute and the Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement.***

Almost immediately after the signature of the Bled Treaty in August 1954 which signalled the apogee of Yugoslav-Greek-Turkish cooperation, the situation started to deteriorate due to the emergence of the Cyprus issue. At least from 1950 the Greek Cypriot majority was pressing Britain (and Greece) for union (*enosis*) with the latter. From 1953 and increasingly by 1954 the Papagos government was asking for a bilateral UK-Greek accommodation, which would provide for the application of the principle of self-determination in Cyprus.<sup>434</sup> This would obviously lead to the latter's union with Greece, and in exchange Athens was willing to lease bases to the British on Cyprus and Greece. In London, Churchill, the COS, the Foreign Office and naturally the Colonial Office were unwilling to consider such proposals. The maintenance of full control over Cyprus was deemed necessary if Britain were to demonstrate its willingness and ability to fulfil its treaty obligations in the Middle East; a possible retreat would probably undermine the whole British position in the region. In addition, the Suez base issue and the final British withdrawal had discredited the idea of leased bases in the minds of both the military and civilian policy-makers.<sup>435</sup>

Facing British intransigence, Papagos decided to recourse to the United Nations, despite Turkish indications that Ankara opposed any change of the status

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<sup>434</sup> Ioannis Stefanidis, *Isle of Discord: nationalism, imperialism and the making of the Cyprus problem* (London: Hurst & Company, 1999), pp.47-51.

<sup>435</sup> Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, 'Cold War Pressures, Regional Strategies, and Relative Decline: British Military and Strategic Planning for Cyprus, 1950-1960', *The Journal of Military History* 73/4 (October 2009), pp.1143-1166.

quo. The appeal was eventually submitted to the UN on 20 August 1954.<sup>436</sup> In mid-September 1954 Churchill wrote to Eisenhower explaining the UK position on the Cyprus issue and warned about the danger of significant deterioration in UK-Greek and Greek-Turkish relations if the Cyprus issue were discussed at the United Nations. Specifically, he pointed out that during the recent NATO 'Keystone' manoeuvre, 'Greek and Turkish officers could scarcely be brought to speak to each other'.<sup>437</sup>

In December 1954, the Greek appeal to the United Nations for the application of the right of self-determination in Cyprus was discussed and defeated in the General Assembly. The British and the Turks strongly opposed the prospect of any change of the status quo at the island. The Americans in principle were more sympathetic to the Greek case, but had consistently, though secretly, discouraged the Greek leadership from appealing to the UN; such an action would allow the USSR and the Soviet bloc to get involved in an intra-NATO issue. Even the Yugoslavs disagreed with the Greek move, for fear it might weaken the Balkan alliance (Belgrade eventually supported Greece during the UN discussion). Therefore, the appeal to the UN was an ill-fated decision which disregarded the unfavourable international environment. Consequently, the General Assembly decided not to discuss the Greek appeal 'for the present' (the last phrase added at US insistence as a face-saving formula for the Greeks), and all NATO members except Iceland voted against the Greek item. This infuriated the Greek public opinion, who felt particular resentment for the US attitude in New York and Greece's 'betrayal'. Large demonstrations against the Western powers took place in Greece. The first seeds of

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<sup>436</sup> Stefanidis, *Isle of Discord*, pp.52-55, 74.

<sup>437</sup> DDRS (e-source), No CK3100283348, Sir Roger Makins to White House, 20-September-1954.

anti-Americanism in Greece were sown during that period, since another thorny issue, the 'extraterritoriality' of US personnel in Greece, was also coming to surface.<sup>438</sup>

A concurrent development was the Turkish veto of the project of the establishment of a main NATO base in the Aegean, on Leros island. Specifically, after careful study CINCMED's staff selected the Greek island of Leros in South-eastern Aegean as the most appropriate place to construct a base for fast patrol vessels. The NAC held on 18 December 1953 had authorised the construction of underground storage for POL and ammunition on the island. The project was approved by all member countries.<sup>439</sup> Initially Turkey had tried to have the base built on its own coast, but then, in 1954, opposed the project of the Leros base on the grounds that it would violate the 1947 Italian Peace Treaty – of which Turkey was not a signatory member – which afforded the Dodecanese islands to Greece, but also provided for their demilitarization. Therefore, in the Turkish view, the fortification of Leros might initiate a Greek policy of fortifying the rest of the Dodecanese islands, thus raising an additional security concern for Ankara. The main reasons for Turkey's reaction were, first, Turkish deep-seated resentment that almost all the Aegean islands (which were populated by Greeks but once had been Ottoman territory and some are in close proximity to Asia Minor coast) were now Greek; and second, this reaction came as a counteraction to the Greek demand for the application of self-determination in Cyprus, which could lead to the latter's unification with Greece.<sup>440</sup> Indeed, in the autumn of 1954 the Turks approached the British seeking London's understanding

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<sup>438</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, pp.50-51; Ioannis Stefanidis, *Stirring the Greek Nation: Political Culture, Irredentism and Anti-Americanism in Post-War Greece, 1945-1967* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp.181-2, 187-90.

<sup>439</sup> NARA/RG59/711.56381/12-854, Box 2913, Department of Defense, Memorandum for Department of State, 8-December-1954.

<sup>440</sup> Iatrides, 'Failed Rampart', pp.58-74; Stefanidis, *Asymmetroi Hetairoi*, p.231.

and support, and the Foreign Office 'had some sympathy with Turkey with regard to the relation of Cyprus to the question'.<sup>441</sup> SHAPE authorised the Standing Group to re-examine the issue from a political angle, but NATO military planners insisted that Leros was indeed the most appropriate location. Nevertheless, at the NAC session of December 1954 Turkey vetoed the Leros base project. The United States and Britain feared that the whole issue would cause serious damage to Greek-Turkish relations and that the political repercussions would outweigh the obvious military advantages of the project.<sup>442</sup> Therefore, in effect they initially suspended and, as we will see in subsequent a chapter, finally cancelled the whole project, although Gruenther insisted that Leros was the most, if not the only one, appropriate place for the construction of the base. For its part, the Defense Department annoyed at the whole issue, characterised Turkish objections as 'utter nonsense'.<sup>443</sup>

While the Southern Flank's political cohesion had begun to deteriorate, the situation was further aggravated by Yugoslav unwillingness to establish a stable cooperation with Yugoslavia in the military field. Belgrade also tended to downgrade the military aspects of the Balkan Alliance. The Soviets were seeking a rapprochement with Belgrade and it was therefore considered important to undertake positive steps to ensure the continuation of Yugoslav ties with the West. In late 1954-early 1955 the Standing Group powers wished the reopening of defence talks with Belgrade. In the spring of 1955, the Yugoslavs responded that political discussions dealing with the general international situation and specifically with future Soviet intentions should precede any talks for coordinated planning. Specific technical

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<sup>441</sup> NARA/RG59/711.56381/11-3054, Box 2913, Memorandum of Conversation, 30-November-1954.

<sup>442</sup> NARA/RG9/711.56381/12-854, Box 2913, Department of Defense, Memorandum for Department of State, 8-12-1954.

<sup>443</sup> NARA/RG218/E.UD50, Box 18, Background, Island of Leros, 1-June-1955.

military talks to arrange details regarding western military aid to Yugoslavia were also desirable. For their part, the Western powers did not wish to get involved in detailed discussions before some general questions of military cooperation between Yugoslavia and the Western defence system were addressed.<sup>444</sup> Obviously, the Yugoslav leadership did not deliberate to establish a link with either SHAPE or AFSOUTH. Therefore, it was necessary for the West to convince Belgrade that military coordination was essential and that a channel for discussion should be opened.

For their part, the COS concluded that since defence planning could not be carried out through NATO channels, the second best method would be by quadripartite (US-UK-French-Yugoslav) meetings. Of course, the Yugoslavs ought to be aware that, inevitably, the Western powers would be influenced by NATO planning in the Southern Flank. If the Yugoslavs preferred to use the Greeks and the Turks as intermediaries to achieve military coordination under the cloak of the Balkan Alliance, the allies should accept it; this was considered as the least satisfactory option from the military point of view. According to the COS, the Western powers should discuss with Yugoslavia its role in a hot war, with particular reference to its plans for the defence of northern Yugoslavia – again the West placed emphasis on the Italian, rather than Greek or Turkish defence. Furthermore, there was the hope that Yugoslavia might be eventually convinced to discuss ways to achieve some measure of coordination of its defence plans with CINCSOUTH. In any case, the Western officials should ensure that they would acquire some knowledge of Yugoslav military planning. Last but not least, the COS advised that Yugoslavia's prior commitment to proceed with coordinated defence planning should not constitute a precondition for

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<sup>444</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/58, COS(55)122, 31-May-1955.



the grant of military equipment by the West. The supply of equipment could be used to keep Tito away from the Soviets, and it would be a tactical error to try to impose any conditions on the Yugoslavs.<sup>445</sup>

Indeed, when in February 1955 Georgi Malenkov was removed from the Soviet Union's leadership and the party's hierarchy, the USSR distanced itself even more from Stalin's legacy.<sup>446</sup> The way for better relations with Tito was cleared, particularly since Molotov – Tito's last Soviet foe – was also becoming increasingly isolated. Consequently, by early 1955 the Yugoslav leaders and the press explicitly denied the existence of any link between the Balkan Alliance and NATO, in contrast to previous comments made during 1954. Moreover, they put emphasis on the need that Belgrade, Athens and Ankara pursue wider common goals, like economic and cultural cooperation, and played down the military ones (although, evidently, the Balkan Pacts had focused primarily, if not exclusively, on the tripartite military cooperation).<sup>447</sup> In the spring of 1955 those views were reiterated by Tito, Vice President Kardelj, Foreign Minister Popovic and the Yugoslav press. In May 1955, during his meeting with Kardelj, Adnan Menderes, expressing the views of both the Turkish and Greek governments, raised serious doubts about the optimistic Yugoslav belief that the international situation – and especially the Soviet aims – had changed fundamentally since the previous year. The Turkish Prime Minister considered the Balkan Pact still very important for regional security, and though positive to the

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<sup>445</sup> TNA/DEFE/4/77, COS(55)46<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 16-June-1955.

<sup>446</sup> Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p.98.

<sup>447</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, pp.157-9.

prospect of economic and cultural cooperation, stressed that the politico-military aspects of the alliance should not be downgraded.<sup>448</sup>

Then, in May 1955 the Soviet 'peace offensive' towards Belgrade culminated. It was soon announced that a Soviet delegation comprised of top state and party officials headed by Khrushchev and Bulganin would visit Yugoslavia the following days.<sup>449</sup> The Yugoslav government informed the Greek, Turkish, and the other Western governments only after all arrangements for the visit had been set. Belgrade tried to allay fears that a major shift of its policy and orientation was imminent, but soon started to deemphasise the political and military character of the Balkan Alliance once again. Indeed, the Soviet opening proved successful. The Soviet leadership in effect recognised Tito's deviation, and the Yugoslavs wished to appease Moscow by keeping distance from their Balkan allies and the West. That attitude alarmed Greece, since a possible Yugoslav return to the Soviet bloc would make the Greek military position desperate. However, when King Paul visited Belgrade in September 1955, Tito assured him that Yugoslavia would not change course; but he also declared that he did not place any significance on the military aspects of the Balkan Alliance.<sup>450</sup> So, evidently the latter became a dead letter.

It should be stressed that despite the considerable improvement of bilateral Yugoslav-Soviet relations during 1955, particularly on the political and economic fields, this development was not matched by commensurate improvement of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet-bloc countries, particularly Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria. Financial negotiations held between

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid, pp.160-2.

<sup>449</sup> Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, pp.99-100.

<sup>450</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.51; Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, pp.162-3.

Yugoslavia and Hungary failed, while problems over the question of frontier markings still existed. Moreover, Tito criticised the Hungarian, Czechoslovakian and Romanian leaderships.<sup>451</sup> Last but not least, the Macedonian question and past mutual enmity and distrust continued to poison Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations.

Naturally, from mid-1955 onwards the NATO allies were increasingly concerned over how to deal with Yugoslavia. From the military viewpoint, Belgrade's attitude to NATO, the United States and Italy was unsatisfactory. The Yugoslavs appeared unwilling to engage in military planning with the West and could be hardly regarded as a reliable collaborator by the Western powers. The JCS proposed that the US government should review the military aid programme for Yugoslavia, since Tito was not cooperating either with the United States or with Greece and Turkey in coordinated defence planning.<sup>452</sup>

Moreover, some US officials, particularly of the Defense Department, considered that Tito should not be further encouraged to follow his course of neutralism, for fear that US allies might be spurred to follow a similar path. However, according to other views (like Dulles') Tito's value was mainly political: Yugoslavia was the only deflected ex-Soviet satellite, offering the West 'the only effective leverage we can use to split the Soviet bloc'. According to this view, the country's present status between the West and the East held immense attraction for the satellites of the USSR. If any satellite detached itself from Moscow, it should find benefits available from the West. In any event, the West would suffer a major political disaster if Yugoslavia fell back into the Soviet bloc. The US policy makers decided that the

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<sup>451</sup> NATO/C-M(55)87, Memorandum on Policy vis-à-vis the Soviets and the Education of NATO Public Opinion, 14-October-1955.

<sup>452</sup> DDEL/Whitman Files/NSC series, Box 6, 247<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 5-May-1955.

rate of US aid to the Yugoslavs should be slowed down to some extent. It should be noted that the Western attitude could not be easily adjusted because a dilemma existed whether Tito was trying to double-cross the western allies or he just felt compelled to adopt an increasing neutralist position and improve his relations with the USSR mainly for home consumption.<sup>453</sup>

Until then, other developments overshadowed the virtual dissolution of the Balkan Alliance. In the aftermath of Greece's defeat in the UN in December 1954, Papagos himself fell seriously ill in March 1955. Soon, a struggle for his succession erupted between the two vice premiers, Foreign Minister Stephanopoulos and Defence Minister Kanellopoulos, at a time when the Greek Cypriots of EOKA (National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters) started their insurgency against the British in the island (on 1 April 1955). Therefore, effectively no one could direct and coordinate Greek foreign policy.<sup>454</sup> Meanwhile, despite failure in December 1954, the Greek officials had decided to bring the Cyprus issue to the next UN General Assembly. The US Ambassador in Athens Cavendish Cannon had been advising Papagos to avoid committing Greece irrevocably to any specific course of action. Dulles himself advised caution, but to no avail. The Americans believed that it would be better for Greece to keep a rather flexible position and maintain its manoeuvrability; in such a case, Athens would be able to take advantage of changing circumstances that might develop in the near future. Dulles stressed to the Greek Ambassador in Washington, George Melas, that Anthony Eden had just replaced Churchill in the premiership: the latter was adamant to preserve the Empire, but the

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<sup>453</sup> DDEL/Whitman Files/NSC series, Box 7, 271<sup>st</sup> NSC Meeting, 22-December-1955.

<sup>454</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-7, XXIV, p.540; also Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.51.

Greek Government should give a 'breathing spell' to Eden to enable him take over and then deal with the Cyprus issue.<sup>455</sup>

It was soon proved that Eden shared Churchill's aim for the preservation of the British position in Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. For their part, the COS once again insisted on the need for the retention of full sovereignty over Cyprus, since the island was the last site remaining for the function of the Middle East Headquarters. The CIGS Field Marshal Sir John Harding stressed that those headquarters constituted the centre of UK military influence with friends and allies (referring specifically to the Turks) in the Middle East during peace and the focal point for the defence of the region in wartime.<sup>456</sup> The military also argued that the loss of British facilities in Cyprus might result to the complete breakdown of all plans for the development of any Middle East defence scheme and would prevent Britain from fulfilling its obligations towards Iraq and Jordan.<sup>457</sup> Moreover, the COS emphasised that considerable arguments from the military point of view existed against the usage of leased bases in Cyprus. They deemed necessary to have full user rights of all the island's transportation and communication utilities in peacetime and full control of it in wartime. Indeed, recent experience in Egypt, but also in Iraq – where the facilities agreement eroded gradually due to the rise of nationalism – had demonstrated British inability to maintain treaty facilities in the face of local opposition.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-7, XXIV, p.534, 536.

<sup>456</sup> TNA/DEFE/4/78, COS(55)56<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 12-July-1955.

<sup>457</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/59, COS(55)153, 7-July-1955.

<sup>458</sup> TNA/DEFE/4/79, COS(55)70<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 30-August-1955.

**ii) *The watershed: the September 1955 anti-Greek riots in Istanbul and Izmir, the resurrection of Greek-Turkish enmity and NATO's (non-)response.***

In June 1955 the British tried to outmanoeuvre the Greek and Greek Cypriot pressure by inviting Greece and Turkey to a tripartite conference in London dealing with security issues in the Mediterranean, 'including Cyprus'. After much consideration the Greek government decided to attend the conference which opened in late August.<sup>459</sup> Meanwhile, the intransigent Turkish attitude towards the application of self-determination or even self-government in Cyprus was demonstrated by statements made by Menderes and the new Foreign Minister, Fatin Rüştü Zorlu, before and during the Tripartite Conference. The former publicly argued on 24 August that 'if there is any question of a change in the status quo this must be based not on ethnic considerations but on much more important realities and criteria. Our delegation goes to London to defend the maintenance of the status quo as a minimum condition'. For his part, Zorlu, who headed the Turkish delegation, used even more inflammatory language. On 1 September he declared that 'if there is any question of altering the status of Cyprus... the Turkish Government will demand a return to the status prior' [to the transfer of sovereignty from Turkey to Britain by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923]. He also added that 'the application of the principle of self-determination... clashes with the right of Turkey to ensure her own security'.<sup>460</sup>

The details of that conference's work are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, on 6 September extensive violent anti-Greek riots took place in Istanbul and Izmir. Those events had been planned by the Turkish authorities as a mean to

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<sup>459</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.51.

<sup>460</sup> TNA/FO/371/117666/RG1081/1314, Note on Turkish Attitude regarding Cyprus, 14-October-1955; also Eden, *Full Circle*, p.400.

bolster Turkey's position during the London Conference. Passions ran very high in the Turkish public: first, Turkish officials had been referring to 'information' that the Greek-Cypriots were planning a massacre of Turkish-Cypriots; second, the Turks organised a pretext and planted a bomb in the Turkish Consulate in Salonika (the Consulate had once been Kemal Atatürk's home). The spearhead of the riots and the ensuing destruction were groups of extreme nationalists, particularly the 'Cyprus is Turkish' Association, and probably the local organization of the governing Democrat Party itself. However, the Turkish government lost control of events: as the security forces remained inactive, many members of the Greek minority in Istanbul were physically attacked or humiliated, while the mob inflicted heavy damage on Greek properties. The Ecumenical Patriarchate did not escape either. In HALFSEE in Izmir, serious incidents against Greek officers and their families occurred, while the Greek flag was also offended and the Greek consulate was burned down.<sup>461</sup>

During the night of 6-7 September the Greek officers and their families were sheltered in HALFSEE's buildings. The local Turkish authorities dispatched additional guards at the residences of the Greek officers and at HALFSEE. Furthermore, in order to restore order in Istanbul and Izmir the Turkish Government proclaimed martial law shortly after midnight.<sup>462</sup> Meanwhile, both countries sent reinforcements at their common border in Thrace.<sup>463</sup> Those dramatic events and the rapidly deteriorating situation in Cyprus was a watershed in Greek-Turkish affairs and in NATO's policy and strategy in the Southern Flank. Military cooperation and

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<sup>461</sup> TNA/FO/371/117711/50, Stewart (Charge d' Affaires) to Macmillan, No.193, 22-September-1955; also, Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.51; Theodore Coulombis, *The United States, Greece, and Turkey: the troubled triangle* (New York: Praeger, 1983), p.29; Walter Weiker, *The Turkish Revolution 1960-61: Aspects of Military Politics* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1963), pp.33-35.

<sup>462</sup> NATO/PO/55/872, Ismay to NATO Permanent Representatives: Kanellopoulos letter to Ismay, 17-October-1955.

<sup>463</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, p.170.

coordination between Greece and Turkey within the framework of became extremely problematic, because Turkish actions were directed not only against civilians, but also against the Greek officers serving in Izmir.

The September events in Istanbul and Izmir had serious repercussions not only on Greek-Turkish and UK-Greek relations, but also on US-Greek and NATO-Greek relations. The Vice Premier and Defence Minister Panayiotis Kanellopoulos informed SACEUR Gruenther that Greek units would not participate in any NATO exercises scheduled for September which provided for direct or indirect cooperation with Turkish units.<sup>464</sup> Greece got little, if any, support from the other NATO members and officials. Gruenther expressed his understanding for the Greek decision not to participate in NATO manoeuvres but urged that the Greek forces soon resume their full participation in the NATO military effort. Moreover, he preferred to modify the programme of the exercises rather than cancel them.<sup>465</sup> For his part, Gruenther's Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Cortlandt Schuyler informed Ismay that he viewed that 'following the incidents of the night of 6-7 September, the NATO military authorities at Izmir rendered timely and appropriate assistance to the Greek officers at LANDSOUTHEAST and have since done all in their power to insure against a recurrence of such incidents and to aid in obtaining moral and material reparation for the damage caused'.<sup>466</sup>

The NAC held a similar view in mid-September. Secretary General Lord Ismay, argued that the Greek reaction constituted the first rift within NATO and asked

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<sup>464</sup> NATO/PO/55/746, Ismay to NATO Permanent Representatives: Kanellopoulos' letter to Gruenther, 9-September-1955.

<sup>465</sup> NATO/PO/55/754, Ismay to NATO Permanent Representatives: Gruenther's response to Kanellopoulos, 13-September-1955.

<sup>466</sup> NATO/PO/55/872, Ismay to NATO Permanent Representatives: Schuyler's letter to Ismay on the rehabilitation of Greek officers, 17-October-1955.



whether Greece could reconsider its decision as a result of recent Turkish promises to prevent further disturbances, punish the guilty and offer compensations to the victims. The representatives of the other members acknowledged that the issue was a delicate one but expressed their hope that Greece would soon carry out all its commitments to NATO. Turkish actions received virtually no condemnation. The Greek representative Georgios Exintaris assured the Council that his government wished to fulfil all its duties, but public opinion in Greece was so strong on the subject of events in Istanbul and Izmir that any government would be overthrown if Greek forces participated in NATO manoeuvres.<sup>467</sup> Obviously, the NATO members (the Americans and the British not least) and the institutions of the Alliance were not at all ready and prepared to deal effectively with intra-member state disputes.

The feeling of abandonment and ‘betrayal’ from the West, first experienced by the Greek public and the press in December 1954, was exacerbated and was now shared even by the pro-Western opposition parties and leaders (Sophocles Venizelos’ party, whose leader had achieved Greece’s admission to NATO in 1951-2, asked for a re-examination of the country’s foreign policy). Voices calling for a possible re-orientation of Greek foreign policy were raised even by deputies of the governing conservative Rally party, who wondered ‘on which side of the Iron Curtain there existed more guarantees for freedom and security’. The Greek press unanimously blamed Britain for the tension in Greek-Turkish relations and attributed the anti-Greek manifestations in Turkey to the ‘ruthless British policy of “divide and rule”’.<sup>468</sup>

The worst was to come very soon. Until that point, Greek resentment had been confined mainly to the British and Turkish attitude, and to some extent to

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<sup>467</sup> NATO/C-R(55)37, 15-September-1955.

<sup>468</sup> *The Times*, 7 & 9-September-1955; Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.52.

NATO. In an effort to ease tension and restore NATO's normal functioning at the Southern Flank, Gruenther ordered CINCSOUTH Admiral Fichteler to visit Athens on 19 September. The latter was supposed to smooth Greek anger against the attacks made on Greek officers and their families in Izmir and to coax Greece into resuming its participation in NATO manoeuvres. On the other hand, the planned visit of deputy SACEUR Field-Marshal Montgomery was cancelled due to the rise of anti-British sentiment in Greece.<sup>469</sup>

Those gestures did not have any positive impact, though, due to two ill-judged US actions. On 18 September Dulles sent identical letters to Papagos and Menderes urging for restraint and asking to compromise their differences to preserve NATO solidarity. In effect, he put Greece and Turkey in the same position, seeming to attribute equal responsibility to both countries for the recent outrages in Turkey, and this created an outcry in Greece. Moreover, on 21-23 September the second Greek attempt to put Cyprus on the agenda of the UN General Assembly failed, since the Western powers, headed by the United States (and Britain), voted against the Greek claim – in sharp contrast to the USSR, Poland and Egypt.<sup>470</sup> Those developments inflamed passions further, and Greek opposition leaders of the Right and Centre (and of course the Left) attacked openly the government and NATO, and pressed for a reconsideration of the country's system of alliance or even for a policy of 'equal friendship' towards the West and the East. The press, conservative and liberal, mounted an all-out vicious attack against the government and NATO; expressions like 'traitors' and 'Quislings' referring to the Greek ministers, and 'Holy

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<sup>469</sup> *The Times*, 17-September-1955.

<sup>470</sup> Coulombis, *The United States*, p.29; idem, *Greek Political Reaction to American and NATO Influences* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1966), pp.95-96; James Edward Miller, *The United States and the Making of Modern Greece: History and Power, 1950-1974* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), p.58.

Alliance' and 'bonds which have proved to be chains' referring to NATO, were used, even by newspapers which were pillars of Greek conservative opinion. The country should therefore revert to isolationism, because 'Hellenism no longer had friends'.<sup>471</sup>

Greece's situation was desperate. Papagos was dying and the conservative government was headless and demoralised, since the two deputy premiers, Stephanopoulos and Kanellopoulos, effectively were destroyed politically (at least for the short-term) due to the events of September 1955. At that time the Centre-Liberal opposition was weak and fragmented into many parties and factions and could not offer a viable alternative. Furthermore, the Greek public and the press felt humiliated and were extremely bitter towards Britain, Turkey, the United States and NATO; therefore, there were voices calling for the adoption of a more neutralist policy. The Balkan Pacts had been virtually dissolved as well. Only King Paul could guarantee some sort of stability and provide a solution. In the aftermath of Papagos' death on 4 October, the King appointed Konstantinos Karamanlis, a successful minister of the Greek Rally who had not been embroiled in the formulation of Greek foreign and defence policy, as Prime Minister. Karamanlis kept for himself the Ministry of Defence replacing Kanellopoulos, while Spyros Theotokis replaced Stephanopoulos as Foreign Minister.<sup>472</sup>

The new Greek leadership, in an effort to appease the public and demonstrate its bitterness to its NATO allies, affirmed a previous decision that the Greek forces would not participate in the NATO manoeuvre 'Red Trident 110' and any other NATO manoeuvres planned for October. In addition, the Greek expeditionary force

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<sup>471</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.52-53; Stefanidis, *Stirring*, pp.191-6; *Kathimerini*, 22 and 25-September-1955.

<sup>472</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-7, XXIV, pp.541, 544-7.

was recalled from Korea.<sup>473</sup> It should be mentioned that, at the same time, and despite the wave of anti-Western spirit sweeping the Greek public, the new Greek government appeared negative to the Soviet policy of 'slackened tension' and the prospect of detente, and remained a staunch support of the Atlantic Alliance. According to Athens, the Allies ought to remain strong and united, while effort should be made to convince the public opinion of the NATO members for the need for continuing economic sacrifices to sustain the rearmament effort. Furthermore, Exintaris asked that NATO should also expand its scope and deal with economic issues as well.<sup>474</sup>

Meanwhile, UK-Greek relations had received a serious blow, and that had implications in NATO policy as well. After the fiasco of the London Conference and the September events in Istanbul and Izmir the British policy makers initially considered 'to tackle the Greeks on the subject of their cooperation with NATO' even by proposing the cutting off of NATO infrastructure funding.<sup>475</sup> However, they soon recognized that they 'should do everything [they] could to avoid making worse the present split with the Greeks'.<sup>476</sup> One reason was that the UK delegation in NATO informed the FO that 'it would be bad tactics to promote a gang-up against Greece', since Britain should not 'bank too much on the unqualified acceptance of the British case by all members of NATO' (not least by the Americans).<sup>477</sup> The other reason was

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<sup>473</sup> Svolopoulos, Konstantinos (ed.), *Konstantinos Karamanlis: Arheio, Gegonota kai Keimena [Archive, Facts and Essays]*, 12 vols. (Athens: Ekdotiki Athenon and Konstantinos Karamanlis Foundation, 1992-7) (hereafter: *KKA*), vol.1, p.277; NATO/PO/55/848, Ismay to NATO Permanent Representatives: Exintaris' letter to Ismay, 11-October-1955.

<sup>474</sup> NATO/C-R(55)44, Summary Record of Council Meeting, 11-October-1955.

<sup>475</sup> TNA/FO/371/118564/WU10774/2, Hood (FO) to Cheetham (UK Permanent Delegation to NATO), 16-September-1955; TNA/FO/371/118564/WU10774/5, Young (FO) to Cheetham (UK Permanent Delegation to NATO), 4-October-1955.

<sup>476</sup> TNA/DEFE/4/79, COS(55)76<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 22-September-1955.

<sup>477</sup> TNA/FO/371/118564/WU10774/6, Steel (UK Permanent Delegation to NATO) to Young (FO), 7-October-1955.

that since the new Karamanlis government had recently taken over in Greece, it seemed wise to 'give it an easy ride'.<sup>478</sup>

In any case, the British position in Greece, dominant from 1830 to 1946 and still significant until 1954-5, virtually collapsed. The Greeks explicitly expressed their wish that the British Naval Mission, stationed there from 1913, be withdrawn. Both the British Embassy in Athens and the First Sea Lord Admiral Earl Mountbatten agreed that the Naval Mission should be withdrawn. But that would constitute a break of a traditional link with Greece, and if possible the door should be kept open for the return of the Mission when bilateral relations improved. Indeed, it was acknowledged that although from the military point of view the Mission's withdrawal was unlikely to have any serious repercussions, it might nevertheless be important in the wider political context of UK-Greek relations that the Mission remained in Greece, if at all possible.<sup>479</sup> Finally, the Greeks insisted and the British Naval Mission left Greece on 14 October.<sup>480</sup>

On 13 October Karamanlis met General Lawton Collins, US representative in NATO's Military Committee and the Standing Group. The former expressed his dissatisfaction with what he considered as excessive US aid to Yugoslavia and especially Turkey which upset the regional balance of power. Apparently, the Greek policy makers feared that in the near future, the growing Turkish military might would be directed against Greece. For sure, the Greek leadership was resentful of the growing role of Turkey in western military and political plans – especially in connection with the Middle East. Relevant to that was the feeling that the United

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<sup>478</sup> TNA/FO/371/118564/WU10774/6, Young (FO) to Steel (NATO), 8-October-1955.

<sup>479</sup> TNA/DEFE/4/79, COS(55)77<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 27-September-1955.

<sup>480</sup> *The Times*, 14-October-1955.

States might not fully recognize Greece's strategic importance and reliability, despite past solidarity of the Greek people with their western allies. In addition, Karamanlis insisted that recent events in Istanbul and Izmir were considered by the Greeks as 'slap in face', while the provocations against the Greek officers serving in HALFSEE had to be considered as an insult to NATO itself. In any case, Greece was seeking its allies' help to persuade Turkey to undertake all necessary measures to restore Greek-Turkish relations.<sup>481</sup>

General Collins replied that a powerful and friendly Yugoslavia was to the benefit of Greece, since the latter would be able to implement a more forward defence. As regards Turkey, he said that US military help to each NATO member was taking into consideration NATO requirements for common defence and each member's specific needs and obligations. Therefore, in essence Collins admitted that NATO and the United States had assigned different tasks to Greece and Turkey and recognised the latter's growing significance and. Nevertheless, he tried to reassure Karamanlis that the Americans fully appreciated Greece's importance to NATO and the West. As for the potential Turkish threat against Greece, Collins stressed that he considered that a war between Greece and Turkey was 'unthinkable under any conditions, present or future'. He pointed out that the Turkish Air Force and Navy did not represent a danger because they were not much stronger than the Greek respective services, while the Turkish Army would never be able to break the main Greek defence line lying along the Struma river (here one could justifiably argue that it would pose a danger to Greek Thrace and Eastern Macedonia, east of Struma, if of course the Turks disregarded the Bulgarian threat, which was highly unlikely in the 1950s). Interestingly, Collins tried to allay Greek fears by stating that NATO

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<sup>481</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-7, XXIV, p.548.

members had 'jointly agreed to come to the defence of any member nation no matter what quarter attack may come from'.<sup>482</sup> However, that was his personal interpretation.<sup>483</sup> NATO had no explicit provision for the invocation of article 5 in the event of an armed conflict *within* the alliance.<sup>484</sup>

Meanwhile, the Greek policy makers insisted on the need for moral rehabilitation and economic compensation by Turkey.<sup>485</sup> Indeed, the Turkish officials understood that they had lost sympathy within the alliance. CINCSOUTH Fechteler admitted during his confidential address to the allied military commentators that the riots had been well organised and that the Turkish authorities knew that they were going to occur; however, those riots got completely out of hand and the Turks tried to blame the Turkish Communists for the extensive damage, although evidently communist influence was minimal in the Turkish public.<sup>486</sup> The Turkish government sought to satisfy the Greek demands, at least those which had only short-term implications. Therefore, on 24 October 1955 an official ceremony took place in Izmir; the Greek flag was raised in the new building which was granted by Turkey to house the Greek consulate, and Greek and Turkish military contingents honoured both the Greek flag and the national anthem. The COMLANDSOUTHEAST, General George Read, Turkish officials and the Greek Ambassador in Ankara Ioannis Kallergis were also present, while the Turkish government promised to compensate the Greeks of Istanbul for any damage suffered by the mob and guaranteed the safety of the Greek

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<sup>482</sup> Ibid; KKA, 1, p.280.

<sup>483</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.67.

<sup>484</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-7, XXIV, p.549; KKA, 1, p.278.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid, p.550.

<sup>486</sup> TNA/FO/371/117666/RG1081/1314, Address of Admiral Fechteler to Military Commentators, 14-October-1955.

minority and the Ecumenical Patriarchate.<sup>487</sup> The Greek officers had been already compensated by Turkey in early October.<sup>488</sup>

Then, Greece decided to resume its participation in NATO exercises and at the NAC meeting held on 25 October 1955 Spyros Theotokis reaffirmed Greek attachment to NATO.<sup>489</sup> However, it should be noted that by autumn 1955 Turkey began chasing Greek fishermen. Greece responded by sending naval units in the eastern Aegean to patrol and confront such actions. Moreover, in effect the Turks procrastinated and, despite Greek pressures, did nothing to compensate the thousands civilian victims of the September riots in Istanbul.<sup>490</sup> At any rate, the Greek minority in Istanbul and the Patriarchate would soon face more pressures. Consequently, the Greek-Turkish rupture proved deep and wide, and not just a temporary crisis which would be overcome soon or easily. Despite this, NATO failed to comprehend fully the significance of this development. In contrast to the post-1964 period, when the Greek-Turkish split widened and NATO was periodically reviewing the status of bilateral relations (for example, through Secretary General's reports/'watching briefs' on Greek-Turkish relations), in mid-1950s NATO did not give serious consideration on the developing split between Greece and Turkey.

Therefore, in mid-December 1955 Karamanlis made clear that under the existing circumstances the conference of the Foreign Ministers of the Balkan Alliance could not be convened, as scheduled. Turkey had not undertaken any specific measures for the payment of indemnities to the victims and to the Greek community

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<sup>487</sup> *KKA*, 1, pp.285-6, 288; NATO/C-R(55)49, 4-November-1955.

<sup>488</sup> NATO/PO/55/872, Ismay to NATO Permanent Representatives: Schuyler's letter to Ismay on the rehabilitation of Greek officers, 17-October-1955.

<sup>489</sup> NATO/C-R(55)47, Summary Record of Council Meeting, 25-October-1955.

<sup>490</sup> *KKA*, 1, p.293, 320-1.



of Istanbul for damages inflicted to its schools, churches and cemeteries, the protection of the minority, the punishment of the offenders and the settlement of the dispute on fishing rights. Greece considered the introduction and implementation of such measures as a token of Turkish sincerity and as a precondition for the normalisation of Greek-Turkish relations.<sup>491</sup> Yugoslavia tried to intervene but since it sided with Greece on the question of compensation, it had caused Turkey's suspiciousness. Moreover, Belgrade and Ankara were at odds on the Middle East affairs, since the former did not endorse Turkish policy in the region and the formation of the Baghdad Pact (on the contrary, Tito decided to visit Nasser, a move which annoyed the Turks).<sup>492</sup> Therefore, the hard reality was that in September 1955 the Balkan Alliance suffered the final 'death-blow'.<sup>493</sup>

The defence posture of the Southern Flank of NATO had been seriously undermined. Italian-Yugoslav relations were normalised in autumn 1954 when the Trieste issue was finally settled, but this could not compensate for the dissolution of the Balkan Alliance and the rapid deterioration in UK-Greek and particularly Greek-Turkish relations. From the onset of the Cold War, Greece and Turkey had been firm allies and western strategy in Eastern Mediterranean had been based on that premise. By late 1955, NATO and Washington could not count on the existence of a solid front in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans but had to keep a delicate balance between Athens and Ankara. London, on the contrary, did not keep any balance at all and at least until late 1958 adopted a clearly pro-Turkish policy. Without the shield of the Balkan Alliance, Greece's defence problem was exacerbated. The country was not in a position to repel a Bulgarian or Soviet attack, particularly since the possibility of

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<sup>491</sup> KKA, 1, pp.321-2; also Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, pp.170-1.

<sup>492</sup> Gkota, *Psykhroplemiki Pragmatikotita*, pp.203-4.

<sup>493</sup> *The Times*, 9-September-1955.

Turkish aggression, however remote, could not be excluded. Turkey, although could feel more confident about the security of its eastern frontier due to the conclusion of the Baghdad Pact, could not oversee that the situation had deteriorated at its Balkan frontier. The regional correlation of forces had been redressed in Warsaw Pact's favour, and Turkey could easily be cut off from the West if Greece fell.

Meanwhile, the Americans tried to find means to limit the damage inflicted on US-Greek relations and bolster the position of the Karamanlis government. State Department officials acknowledged that the latter was essentially a friendly, pro-Western government which was trying to subdue the anti-American emotions of the Greek public and gradually rebuild Greek-Turkish relations. It therefore deserved 'full [US] support'. Thus, it was argued that the United States should make a gesture of goodwill by removing the thorny issue of the revision of the US-Greek Base Agreement and particularly the 'extraterritoriality' issue; negotiations with the Greek government should be initiated 'as rapidly as possible'. Of course, it was acknowledged that the Americans should seek to retain the maximum measure of US jurisdiction in criminal cases involving American military personnel in Greece and return only civil jurisdiction to Greece. In any case, the State Department asked the Department of Defence to consider the matter. Then, officers of the two Departments should send instructions to the US Embassy in Athens.<sup>494</sup> In any case, the issue was virtually deferred until the autumn of 1956.<sup>495</sup>

Another seismic event for the Southern Flank was recorded in March 1956, when the British deported the Greek-Cypriot leader Archbishop Makarios from Cyprus and sent him into exile to the Seychelles. In May the British started the

<sup>494</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, pp.557-558.

<sup>495</sup> Stefanidis, *Asymmetroi Hetairoi*, p.223.

executions of EOKA fighters. UK-Greek relations now were in ruins. Large demonstrations took place in most big Greek cities, the anti-Western sentiment rose significantly, and Greek-Cypriot leaders asked for Greek withdrawal from NATO. The Greek government also withdrew its Ambassador from London, and for a whole year (until Makarios' release in April 1957) it was not represented by a full ambassador in one of the most important capitals of NATO.<sup>496</sup>

Those dramatic events constituted a watershed in the Cyprus dispute and in British policy. Gradually, London decided that irrespective of potential dangers regarding Greece's position towards NATO and the West, Greek and Greek-Cypriot needs and views were not to be considered. Whitehall and the Foreign Office claimed that the Greek threats to leave NATO and adopt a neutralist foreign policy were essentially a bluff. At any rate, soon the British policy makers seemed eager to accept even the scenario of a neutralist Greece, because from mid-1956 onwards they regarded partition of the island as the only way to break the deadlock and satisfy their most significant regional ally, Turkey. As regards the Turkish position, Ankara opposed any NATO role in Cyprus, at least during 1956, because it feared that any NATO mediation would sooner or later lead to *enosis*. Officially, the Turks argued that NATO mediation would merely inflame the issue and cause significant damage to the prestige of the alliance. In addition, the Turks justifiably believed that they could better and more effectively communicate their views and interest directly to Britain and the United States, rather than if NATO was interposed itself between them.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, 'Heirs of the King Makers: the British Embassy in Athens, 1951-61', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 18/3 (2007), pp.573-591. Regarding the British policy on the Cyprus revolt itself, see mostly Robert Holland, *Britain and the Revolt in Cyprus, 1954-1959* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

<sup>497</sup> Robert Holland, 'NATO and the Struggle for Cyprus', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 13/1 (May 1995), pp.33-61.

After the deportation of Makarios, Greece urged that some form of settlement acceptable to all three parties be reached, emphasizing the 'capital importance of not allowing Greco-Turkish relations to be further impaired'. In April 1956 the Greek Permanent Representative in NATO, Michael Melas, invited the NAC to offer its good offices in promoting –secret- negotiations.<sup>498</sup> On the US part, while State Department officials urged John Foster Dulles to intervene actively to 'save' Greece for the West, the Secretary of State viewed that the Cyprus problem should be solved in Cyprus; NATO might have a peripheral, supportive role of secondary importance. Consequently, Cyprus was left off the agenda of the NAC meeting in Copenhagen in May 1956.<sup>499</sup> Generally, during 1955-6 the US policy makers tended to regard the Cyprus problem mainly as an Anglo-Greek issue and downgraded the Turkish interest. Partly for this reason, State Department diplomats had been somewhat suspicious that Whitehall had used Turkey as a stalking horse on that matter.<sup>500</sup>

One could justifiably argue that all interested parties were afraid that NATO mediation in the Cyprus dispute would not lead to a solution. In particular, if one party did not get what it regarded as its right as a result of NATO mediation, it might find itself subject to domestic pressure to stop actual cooperation with NATO or even leave the alliance; then, the passion generated by the Cyprus problem would be directed against NATO itself.<sup>501</sup> Apparently, it was Greece which was facing mostly this danger, since it feared that it would not find a sympathetic audience to the NATO allies and did not want to prejudice in any way its appeal to the UN. In addition,

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<sup>498</sup> TNA/FO/371/123885/RG1081/799, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, 25-April-1956.

<sup>499</sup> Holland, 'NATO', pp.33-61.

<sup>500</sup> TNA/FO/371/123897/RG1081/1185G, Makins (Washington) to FO, No.1347, 13-June-1956.

<sup>501</sup> TNA/FO/371/12885/RG1081/807, FO to Rome, 15-May-1956.

NATO did not have a mechanism suitable to solve inter-allied disputes, and took (and still takes) decisions based on the rule of unanimity. Regarding the Cyprus problem, either Britain or Turkey or Greece could veto a NATO decision, thus straining the alliance to a significant extent.

Meanwhile, some of the European allies expressed their opinions in 1956. Italy appeared more sympathetic to the Greek views, since Rome regarded British rule in Cyprus as a colonial anachronism in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>502</sup> In spring 1956 the Italians informed the British that they would welcome a discussion of Cyprus in the forthcoming NAC ministerial meeting, although it would take no initiative to that end; such initiative could come from another party, for example the Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak. The Italian Foreign Ministry had some sort of formula for a provisional agreement, based on the stationing of NATO troops in Cyprus on the model of Malta.<sup>503</sup> For its part, West Germany feared that the Cyprus dispute could cause considerable damage to NATO. After his visit in Athens in May 1956, the German Foreign Minister Heinrich von Brentano expressed his concern over the consequences the Cyprus dispute might have in the near future; mainly, the danger of Greece turning neutralist – probably if the Karamanlis government fell and the Opposition leaders ‘were tempted to embark on a short-sighted policy of neutralism’. Furthermore, he understood Turkey’s strong interest in Cyprus and the dangers in disregarding that interest; however, he also foresaw that ‘the Turkish aspect of the problem might in the long run prove one of the most difficult things to handle’. Brentano viewed that it would probably be extremely difficult to reach a final solution

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<sup>502</sup> Holland, ‘NATO’, pp.33-61.

<sup>503</sup> TNA/FO371/123885/RG1081/807, Rome to FO No.266, 26-April-1956.

satisfactory to both the Greeks and the Turks.<sup>504</sup> The Germans were cautious to avoid becoming critical towards the British or intervene in the matter and had no suggestions to offer for a possible solution. They nevertheless expressed the view that if no viable solution was found shortly, 'the whole Western position in the Eastern Mediterranean would be hopelessly compromised'. Indeed, the UK bases in Cyprus would be useless if Greece was in unfriendly hands, while Turkey would also become isolated.<sup>505</sup>

The other allies were generally unwilling to intervene or even express a specific view. During the NAC meeting in April 1956 the representatives of Belgium and Norway thought that some form of NATO intervention might be useful, if only to keep the issue away from the UN.<sup>506</sup> It also seems that Canada considered that NATO might be brought in to break the deadlock. The Canadian Foreign Minister Lester Pearson thought that the alliance could help the Cypriots 'to swallow a constitution' which would retain internal security, foreign affairs and defence to British hand. He then pointed out that Cyprus was an issue with which NATO was concerned as it might affect the alliance's cohesion. To this remark the British responded that, for the time being, NATO might only be brought as a guarantor of the security of Cyprus, but in any case they believed that such an arrangement would complicate things even further.<sup>507</sup>

Concurrently, the British had decided that at any cost they should not displease Turkey, which was their main regional ally in the Middle East. During June

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<sup>504</sup> TNA/FO/371/123896/RG1081/1147, Bonn to FO, Minute of conversation with von Brentano on the likely political future of Greece, 8-June-1956.

<sup>505</sup> TNA/FO/371/123891/RG1081/1008, Bonn to FO, Conversation of Hoyer-Millar with von Brentano on Cyprus, 24-May-1956.

<sup>506</sup> TNA/FO/371/123885/RG1081/799, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, 25-April-1956.

<sup>507</sup> TNA/FO371/123894/RG1081/1091G, Conversations between Commonwealth Secretary Lord Douglas-Home and Canadian Ministers, May/June-1956.

1956 the Foreign Office was even concerned about the fact that the Turks had done little to express widely their strong interest and their views on Cyprus both in NATO forums and in Washington. Since this had proved ‘a serious handicap’ for the British –friendly governments had perceived that London overrated the Turkish interest- instructions were sent to the UK embassies in allied capitals to ‘do anything possible to secure a better understanding of the Turkish position’ and help Turkish diplomats when the latter took action to that direction.<sup>508</sup>

As regards Yugoslavia, Belgrade generally supported Greece over Cyprus, particularly in the UN, and from 1955 onwards the Yugoslavs stood much closer to Greece than to Turkey. However, the Yugoslavs appeared quite moderate when criticising British policy and its repercussions on regional political and military cooperation. Therefore, the British Embassy in Belgrade appeared somewhat critical to FO directives and argued that in pursuing the British (and Turkish) views, it should avoid provoking the Yugoslavs; the latter might then openly blame London for the virtual dissolution of the Balkan Alliance and ask for a quick settlement of the Cyprus problem. Furthermore, the Yugoslav leaders were not at all ready to condemn EOKA’s ‘terrorism’ since they themselves were not Western bourgeois politicians but former partisans who had assumed their power by the conduct of unconventional-irregular warfare.<sup>509</sup>

In June-July 1956 Greek-Turkish relations deteriorated significantly and the threat of war was aired in the atmosphere. The documentary evidence is not comprehensive but strong indications exist that, in an effort to force a settlement of the Cyprus issue on favourable terms, or at least prevent a UK-Greek compromise

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<sup>508</sup> TNA/FO371/123897/RG1081/1197G, FO to Washington, 29-June-1956.

<sup>509</sup> TNA/FO371/123897/RG1081/1188, Belgrade to FO, 8-June-1956.

settlement, Turkey contemplated military operations against Greece and threatened the latter. On 3 July Menderes gave an interview to the *Daily Telegraph*. He argued that a change of the status quo in Cyprus would affect Turkey's security, and therefore would not be considered as an isolated incident; rather, Turkey would link it with a general reconsideration of the Lausanne Treaty, and might raise issues in Greek Thrace and the Dodecanese islands. In addition, as Vice President Richard Nixon informed the NSC after his return from Turkey, the Turks 'had a positively pathological attitude on the Cyprus problem' and did not hesitate to imply that they might resort to war to prevent *enosis*.<sup>510</sup>

Greece remained calm but asked for US intervention to restrain Turkey and informed the Americans that it would not be impressed by Turkish threats: if attacked, Greece would respond appropriately.<sup>511</sup> The Greek government made gestures of goodwill by bringing fresh proposals for an escape from the Cyprus impasse; these proposals took into account Turkish security anxieties, and, interestingly, gave NATO a role in fixing the date for the application of self-determination in Cyprus; this however was unacceptable to the British, and the proposals were ignored.<sup>512</sup> The Greek leadership also tried to bolster the country's position, met Tito in Corfu and discussed recent developments in Cyprus, the Middle East and the defence of the Balkans. For the first time, the possibility of a bilateral Greek-Yugoslav cooperation, substituting the Balkan Alliance if the latter's revival became impossible, was implied.<sup>513</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> KKA, 2, p.119; also Miller, *The United States*, p.54.

<sup>511</sup> KKA, 2, p.119.

<sup>512</sup> Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, *Britain and the International Status of Cyprus, 1955-59* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Mediterranean and East European Monographs, 1997), pp.73-4

<sup>513</sup> KKA, 2, p.134.



Meanwhile the Greek-Turkish crisis escalated. In August the Greek embassy in Ankara was ransacked and several documents, some of them on defence matters, were taken. That episode was not insignificant because it is probably related with fresh Turkish plans to launch a sudden attack against one or more of the large islands in the Aegean Sea as a means to demonstrate Turkish resolve for a favourable settlement in Cyprus. It appears that Greece was ready to pick up the gauntlet; its army would try to advance in Eastern Thrace, while the Greeks, facing such dramatic situation, might even ask for help from 'any party that might be interested to see Turkey removed from the Straits'.<sup>514</sup>

Of course, the feasibility of both the Turkish and Greek military plans can be easily questioned. In 1956 neither Turkey possessed the means to carry out successfully a combined-arms amphibious and aeronautical operation, nor was the Greek Army equipped with armour, artillery and motors to undertake any significant offensive operation. Most important, neither country could seriously contemplate military operations against the other, so long as the Bulgarian (and Soviet) armed forces could launch a successful attack against the flanks and rear of Greek or Turkish advancing forces in Thrace. Last but not least, the Turkish threat for a general reconsideration of the treaties arranging the status quo and 'security issues' in the whole area, might eventually backfire: if the Turks opened the Pandora's box by forcing a change in the status quo, the Soviets or the Bulgarians would also find an opportunity to achieve revisions to their advantage, particularly at the Straits area, since the latter obviously influenced Soviet and Bulgarian security.

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<sup>514</sup> KKA, 2, pp.128-129; also Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, pp.172-3.

### **iii) *The defence of the Southern Flank, and the Middle East connection***

On 10 May 1955, the NATO Ministerial Meeting discussed the situation in the Middle East. The Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu and the British Foreign Minister Harold Macmillan dealt with the possible effects of the Turco-Iraqi Pact (to which Britain had acceded) on NATO. It was acknowledged that Britain had not undertaken any further commitments by adhering to the Turco-Iraqi Pact, since London was already bound to support Turkey under the NAT and Iraq under the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930. If, however, action should be taken in connection with the Turco-Iraqi Pact which would affect NATO, the NAC would be informed in advance.<sup>515</sup>

During the meeting Zorlu gave an account of the circumstances which led to the conclusion of the Turco-Iraqi Pact. Turkey had made continuous efforts to convince the Arabs that the real danger was the USSR, but Egypt showed considerable hostility towards the conclusion of any defence agreement. Cairo tried to prevent the other Arab states, including Iraq, from entering into an agreement with Turkey or any Western power. Zorlu reassured his colleagues of Turkey's goodwill towards all the members of the Arab League, arguing that any cleavage among the Arab countries would be contrary to Turkish and NATO interests. He stressed that Turkey had an experience of five centuries in dealing with the Arabs and asked for the full support of the other NATO members, or if this was not possible, at least that none of the NATO allies create difficulties to the Baghdad Pact project. Finally, Zorlu called his colleagues to consider the Turco-Iraqi Pact in its global framework, and not

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<sup>515</sup> TNA/FO/371/115510/V1073/798, FO Minute on Brief for Secretary of State's Statement on the Middle East, 4-May-1955.

merely in the limited picture of the Middle East, because the accession of Pakistan would complete the line of defence formed by NATO and SEATO.<sup>516</sup>

John Foster Dulles gave full support to the Turkish initiative. He reiterated his belief that the cornerstone of the defence of the Middle East was the 'Northern Tier' countries which were more concerned about the Soviet threat and much less preoccupied with the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Americans could thus provide material aid to those states more easily. Macmillan emphasised the importance of buttressing the right flank of the southern region of NATO and hoped that the Turco-Iraqi Pact and British accession to it would constitute the basis for the development of a general Middle East defence pact which would prove a deterrent to aggression and would contribute to the stability of the Middle East. He claimed that such development would increase the overall strength of NATO and was therefore in the interest of all NATO members.<sup>517</sup> It should be noted that the US leadership was well aware that the British objectives regarding a possible Anglo-American joint defence effort in the Middle East were mainly two: Britain sought to hold command responsibility in the area in the event of crisis or conflict; and it 'expected the United States to foot the bill required to place the area in some posture of defence'. Therefore, in view of those designs, the Americans avoided entering in discussion with the British on the military level, and confined bilateral talks on the Middle East to a purely political level.<sup>518</sup>

Other allies seemed more restrained on the Baghdad Pact's prospects. The French Foreign Minister, Antoine Pinay, argued that although nobody could question

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<sup>516</sup> NATO/C-R(55)20, 10-May-1955.

<sup>517</sup> TNA/FO/371/115510/V1073/795, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, 10-May-1955; NATO/C-R(55)20, Summary Record of Council Meeting, 10-May-1955.

<sup>518</sup> DDEL/Whitman Files/NSC series, Box 6, 247<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 5-May-1955.

the importance of the Middle East to NATO, the problem how to organise an effective defence was not an easy one. He expressed his full sympathy with the aims of the Turco-Iraqi Pact but claimed that it had not simplified the situation. France would remain outside for the time being, trying to retain the delicate balance in the area. Paris was preoccupied with the situation in Western Mediterranean and North-eastern Africa.<sup>519</sup>

For his part, the Greek Permanent Representative to NATO Georgios Exintaris expressed once again Greece's wish to participate in any Middle East defence scheme; the country's geographical position ('at the gates of the East') justified such participation, while Greece had also many cultural and economic ties with the region. Exintaris viewed that the Arab public opinion needed patient preparation for cooperation with the West and implied that Greece could contribute accordingly by having friendly relations with the Arab world. Furthermore, he expressed the belief that the Turco-Iraqi Pact had added confusion and tended to revive traditional anti-Turkish and anti-Western suspicions in the area. Greece, he continued, would not take any step which might prejudice its relations with the Arab world. It felt that unity among the Arab nations was a political necessity, and on this basis would do anything possible to safeguard thus unity and, if possible, bring the Arab League nations into association with the Baghdad Pact signatories. The Greek government nevertheless believed that this would be a lengthy task which could only be accomplished in an atmosphere of calm and under no compulsion on behalf of the West (or Turkey).<sup>520</sup>

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<sup>519</sup> TNA/FO/371/115510/ V1073795, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, 10-May-1955.

<sup>520</sup> NATO/C-R(55)20, 10-May-1955.

Evidently, even before the September 1955 rupture, Turkey and Greece had adopted a different approach to the issue of the defence organisation and political stabilisation of the Middle East. Ankara had a policy similar to the British one, essentially anti-Nasser, and was pressing relentlessly for the formation of an anti-Soviet military pact even if circumstances did not favour the admission of most Arab countries to it. Athens believed that Arab unity should be preserved, that the West should be patient with the Arabs (including Nasser) and that any pro-Western defence organisation would take much time to materialise and be a success. France, preoccupied as it was with the Algerian War abstained from the Baghdad Pact, while the Americans, despite their verbal endorsement of the project, carefully avoided joining it and establishing any link between NATO and the Middle East.

Meanwhile, other regional developments, this time in Europe, affected the situation at the Italian frontier. On 15 May 1955 the Austrian State Treaty was signed among the United States, Britain, France, the USSR and the Austrian government. It came into force on 27 July 1955 and provided for the neutralisation of the country and the withdrawal of Soviet and Western troops. Therefore, the SACEUR made recommendations to the Standing Group for the redeployment of US units to offset the adverse effects of allied withdrawal from Austria to the defence of North-Eastern Italy. Gruenther recommended that a combat ready force with the most modern capabilities be established in Northern Italy. A portion of the US units withdrawn from Austria should be redeployed to Northeast Italy to form the nucleus of this force. Those forces would be reorganised in order to obtain a nuclear capability. Furthermore, Gruenther emphasised the need for implementing, as scheduled, the Italian plan for the reorganisation of the Italian Armed Forces; the so-called

Mancinelli Plan put emphasis on the reduction of the total number of divisions and on the increase of the number of D-day divisions and of the overall readiness of the Army. Both the Standing Group and Italy concurred with SACEUR's recommendations. The United States agreed, provided that the Italian Government ratified the NATO Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) to complete the US-Italian arrangement concerning the status of US forces in Italy.<sup>521</sup>

In early September 1955 the Standing Group approved the above recommendation and completed an estimate of the military situation arisen by the conclusion of the Austrian State Treaty. Any appraisal of the situation had to be considered as tentative, since many unknown aspects, as the realignment of Soviet forces, the future strength of the Austrian armed forces and the posture and orientation of Austria itself, were not clear. Generally, the Austrian State Treaty had little significance on Soviet military capabilities and a limited effect upon overall NATO defence plans, particularly on the Central Sector. The defence planning pertaining to the Southern Flank (especially Northern Italy), might be adversely affected to some extent, if Austrian neutrality was violated in the event of a NATO-Warsaw Pact war. Although the withdrawal of Allied forces from Austria would deny to NATO the ability to fight a delaying action on Austrian soil, a Soviet land advance would be delayed by the time required to re-enter and cross Austria and the increased opportunities for Allied interdiction operations. Furthermore, although the strength of CINCSOUTH's command would be initially reduced somewhat, his command would be soon strengthened when US forces with a ground tactical atomic capability were positioned in Northern Italy. Therefore, the main adverse influence of the Austrian

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<sup>521</sup> NATO/C-M(55)64, Memorandum on Military Implications for NATO of the Austrian Peace Treaty, 6-July-1955.

State Treaty might be on Yugoslavia's defence planning. So long as Allied forces occupied western Austria, the Yugoslav northern flank was not exposed to a Soviet-bloc invasion. Since after the withdrawal of the Allied forces from Austria this condition would no longer apply, an increased probability existed that the Yugoslavs would withdraw to South-western Yugoslavia in case of Soviet-bloc aggression. Such course of action would leave exposed the critical Ljubljana gap approach into North-eastern Italy. Consequently, it was assessed that the most serious repercussion of the Austrian State Treaty was the possible removal of an inducement for securing Yugoslavia's collaboration with NATO defence plans.<sup>522</sup>

Overall, the NATO military officials seemed quite confident that the Austrian State Treaty would not have significant repercussions on the defence of Italy. The Italian political and military leadership was nevertheless much concerned over the severance of CINCSOUTH's ties with NATO's Central region. After the conclusion of the Austrian State Treaty the Italian Defence Minister Paolo Emilio Taviani had asked for the establishment of a new, powerful NATO command including at least three allied divisions which would be stationed in north-eastern Italy. Evidently, the Italian policy-makers wished the presence of significant US land forces in that sector for political, military and psychological reasons.<sup>523</sup> Of course, such demand was chimerical in the era of the 'New Look' when reduction in US land forces was contemplated and occurred.

Soon, however, the US-Italian negotiations on the stationing in Italy of a US ground task force with atomic capability succeeded. By October this new unit, the

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<sup>522</sup> NATO/S.G.250(Final), A Report on Estimate of the Situation Growing out of the Austrian State Treaty, 2-September-1955.

<sup>523</sup> Leopoldo Nuti, 'U.S. Forces in Italy, 1945-1963', in Simon Duke and Wolfgang Krieger (eds.), *U.S. Military Forces in Europe. The Early Years, 1945-1970* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), pp.249-72.

Southern European Task Force (SETAF) was officially deployed around Verona and Vicenza. It was placed under COMLANDSOUTH's command, the Italian NATO commander responsible for the land forces defending northern Italy. SETAF was soon comprised by two battalions equipped with *Honest John* atomic rockets and two battalions with *Corporal* atomic missiles, plus additional support units, a total of almost 10,000 troops. The former had limited range and could be used almost as conventional field artillery, but the latter had a range of about a hundred miles and could be used for interdiction of Soviet forces massed or advancing deep in Austrian or Yugoslav territory, if war erupted.<sup>524</sup>

The arrival of SETAF with its integrated atomic capability signalled the transformation of Italian strategy and the army's doctrine. SETAF's tactical atomic weapons, perhaps in conjunction with Sixth Fleet's nuclear-capable aircraft, should be used to interdict the Soviet forces during their concentration outside Italy before the Soviet invasion and during their advance through the Alpine passes; therefore, crucial time would be gained to enable Italy to mobilise its forces. Moreover, the Italian Army should be transformed in order to be able to fight both a nuclear war (mainly in the initial stage of a Soviet attack) and a conventional one.<sup>525</sup> Consequently, the Italian frontier was significantly reinforced by the formation of a NATO – that is, US – task force with integrated atomic capability. The deterrent effect of nuclear weapons manned by US units was very high, but even if deterrence failed, the COMLANDSOUTH could count on SETAF's firepower to mount an effective defence against a Soviet offensive. However, the COMLANDSOUTHEAST did not

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<sup>524</sup> Leopoldo Nuti, 'Italy and the Nuclear Choices of the Atlantic Alliance, 1955-63', in Beatrice Heuser and Robert O'Neill, *Securing Peace in Europe, 1945-62. Thoughts for the post-Cold War Era* (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp.222-45.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid.



enjoy such advantages either on the Greek or the Turkish frontiers, which remained very exposed in the event of a Soviet-bloc offensive.

The Italian Government was satisfied with the transfer to Venetia of part of the US troops stationed in Austria and expressed the hope that this represented a first step to the full recognition of the importance of the Mediterranean theatre. During the NAC held in October 1955 the Italian Defence Minister Taviani tried to stress the importance of the Southern Flank sector, where new challenges had emerged, and urged for close attention by the NATO members and the alliance's military authorities. He argued that the Soviets seemed to follow a more active policy in the Middle East and in North Africa. If they decided to launch a sudden attack, they would probably choose the Mediterranean, since such an operation from the Northeast would find very favourable conditions in the Middle East; local countries antagonised one another and lacked military preparedness. Taviani underlined that a Soviet advance towards the Mediterranean would have disastrous effects.<sup>526</sup>

Indeed, the British, the second most significant power in the region, lacked means in that theatre. They were experiencing a shortage of amphibious vessels and maritime aviation. In late 1955, Major General Philips, Chief of Amphibious Warfare, visited the Mediterranean to review points arising from exercises conducted in 1955. He also sought to obtain the views of CINCSOUTH Admiral William Fechteler and CINCAFMED Admiral Sir Guy Grantham on the part that amphibious operations might play in a war against the Soviets. The findings were rather disappointing. There were very few likely assault beaches in the Mediterranean at which an L.S.T. could discharge its load of vehicles within wading depth. In addition, although according to

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<sup>526</sup> NATO/C-R(55)44, 11-October-1955.

the view of the above NATO commanders, amphibians had a primary importance in the Mediterranean, only thirteen of them were in place at that time. Most significantly, in 1955 no British or other troops trained for such operations were assigned to CINCAFMED and no amphibious operations were planned. In any case, due to lack of appropriate means and manpower and the negative political developments with regard to Greece, Turkey and North Africa the conclusion of the training programme for 1956 appeared highly doubtful.<sup>527</sup> In the spring of 1956 the British were even unable to assure the commission of at least one carrier in the Mediterranean (because either the *Ark Royal* or *Eagle* would be refitted). The Admiralty proposed that the availability of one carrier with a full air group fit for service in the Eastern Mediterranean should never be allowed to exceed ten days so as to be able to deal with any possible contingency.<sup>528</sup>

During NATO defence planning discussions on the organisation of allied naval forces, the Greek and Turkish representatives, Admiral Spanides and General Erdelhun respectively, emphasised the need for allied control of the Straits and, if possible, denial of the Black Sea to Soviet naval forces. In case of war the latter would support the land campaigns of the Red Army towards the Straits and the Aegean and would probably also seek to violate the Straits and send submarines and fast patrol vessels in the Aegean and the Mediterranean. Therefore, NATO should be able to engage the enemy in close waters before the Soviets had time to deploy their naval forces. For that aim, Greece and Turkey should be given the means (that is, modern vessels) to make use of their trained reserves and fulfil the tasks assigned to them. Until then, the Greek and Turkish navies had been unable to undertake an

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<sup>527</sup> TNA/DEFE/4/81, COS(55)106<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 22-December-1955.

<sup>528</sup> TNA/DEFE/5/66, COS(56)109, 16-March-1956.

effective modernisation. Lack of funds was one, though not the only or even the main problem, since a lot of money had been spent on maintaining ships which were obsolete. SACEUR Gruenther agreed that the Greek and Turkish navies should be strengthened although he was quite vague on how that would be accomplished.<sup>529</sup> It is highly interesting that despite the significant deterioration in Greek-Turkish relations, the two countries continued to act jointly when asking for NATO support to defend their territory and for allied military aid to strengthen their defence establishments.

On 29 February 1956 Admiral Spanides stressed how far behind Greece was in the application of modern techniques and how weak the NATO shield was in Greece and the Balkan front. The Greek Army in particular was facing a Bulgarian Army equipped with modern weapons (heavy artillery plus 120 heavy tanks and 1,023 medium tanks). The navy's situation was dire, and only the air force was in a better condition due to considerable aid given by the United States and Canada in the provision of modern fighters. Therefore, Spanides concluded that it was natural for the enemy to attack 'in full strength' against the weakest point of the alliance and 'Greece was perhaps that weak point'. The Greek military representative expressed his government's hope for the provision of additional help by its allies and for protection offered by the US nuclear arsenal; he also expressed the persistent Greek anxiety 'whether these weapons would be available or whether they would be available in time'. He stressed that each country should rely, first and foremost and to the extent possible, on its own forces. But the Greeks felt that they were wasting both money and time by allocating funds to the maintenance of obsolete weapons. On the contrary, if they were given more modern equipment they would be able to support

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<sup>529</sup> NATO/AC/100-R/6, Defence Planning – Multilateral Discussions: Tasks and Organization of Naval Forces, 27-February-1956.

increasing quantities of it for the same expenditure – for the foreseeable future, Greece would not afford to purchase new weapons. Furthermore, the Greeks favoured the standardisation of equipment; such development would facilitate replacement of obsolete or obsolescent materiel.<sup>530</sup>

In addition, the Greek leadership felt quite uneasy with the prospect of the relative detente of the Cold War and emphasised in NATO forums that the Soviet military threat retained its absolute priority; despite the ‘superficial’ change of Soviet tactics, Greece claimed that Stalinist principles were still honoured in the USSR, so the defence effort should not be relaxed, ‘even if it were supposed that a real change in Soviet policy was likely’. In the political field, NATO activities towards the USSR should be well concerted and the Soviets should always be aware that they were dealing with an enduring solid alliance. A permanent Greek (and Turkish) argument and proposal was the extension of the scope of the alliance to the political-economic field as well; to meet the new trends in Soviet policy, the most developed NATO countries should contribute to the economic development of the underdeveloped countries (meaning basically Greece and Turkey) which were making heavy sacrifices in the name of joint defence.<sup>531</sup>

Indeed, by mid-1956, the Soviets had launched an impressive ‘peace offensive’ on Greece in an effort to take advantage of the rift in Greek-NATO relations because of the Cyprus question.<sup>532</sup> The spearhead of the Soviet gesture was the offer of economic cooperation with beneficial terms to Greece. Concurrently, Moscow tried to convince Greece that it did not face any danger from the Soviet bloc

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<sup>530</sup> NATO/AC/100-R/10, Defence Planning – Multilateral Discussions: New Weapons and New Equipment, 29-February-1956.

<sup>531</sup> NATO/C-R(56)23, 5-May-1956; *KKA*, 2, p.196.

<sup>532</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.98.

countries, describing Greek fears as ‘psychosis’ which did not justify the maintenance of the size of the Greek Armed Forces. In the summer of 1956 the new Soviet Foreign Minister Dmitri Shepilov paid an unofficial visit to Athens – he was the first Soviet high-ranking official visiting Greece since the Bolshevik Revolution. Shepilov suggested that Greek-Soviet trade relations should be expanded, offered help in carrying out industrialisation projects and underlined that the USSR would neither try to obtain ‘any political influence in Greece through this work’ nor ask the country to leave NATO. Last but not least, Shepilov said that his country would continue to support the application of the principle of self-determination to Cyprus. The Greek leadership declared its willingness for closer economic and trade ties with the USSR provided that Greek sovereignty and political orientation to the West were respected.<sup>533</sup> Although Greece tried to exploit the Soviet overture to gain support for the Cyprus issue at the UN and develop commercial relations with the USSR and other Soviet-bloc states (virtually with all except Albania), it was very cautious to avoid becoming dependent on the Eastern market.<sup>534</sup>

Turkey also appeared reluctant to accept Soviet proposals for the promotion of disarmament and control of armaments, including nuclear weapons. The Turkish leadership was not impressed by unilateral Soviet reduction in conventional forces and implied that they constituted a shift in military potential and priorities (to nuclear weapons, missiles and airpower) rather than real disarmament. In any case, Ankara viewed that such reductions were useless unless they formed part of a comprehensive international set of arrangements which would provide for effective controls,

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<sup>533</sup> NATO/C-R(56)38, 17-July-1956.

<sup>534</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.98.

inspection and protection against surprise attack.<sup>535</sup> Moreover, in the May 1956 NAC meeting the Turks worried about the continuation of political instability in the Middle East which could result in Soviet intervention. Once again Turkey tried to capitalise on its contribution to the Baghdad Pact, claiming that it 'was at present the only instrument of defence against Russian penetration' in the Middle East. Ankara repudiated charges or doubts that the Baghdad Pact in fact caused more tension in the region and argued that it was the consequence and not the cause of regional tension. As expected, the Turks were backed by the British who were determined to make a success of the pact.<sup>536</sup>

On the military field, by late 1955 the NATO specialists were pointing out that Turkey had generally met the force goals in all services, at least quantitatively. Although some qualitative improvements had been made in the army and the air force since 1953-4, significant effort was required to reach adequate effectiveness. The most problematic fields were the AC&W system, logistic support of existing army units and the problem of warship replacement. The Turks contemplated a further increase of their existing forces (particularly of the air force). However, the NATO military authorities and the International Staff recommended that it was of outmost priority to bring existing units to complete effectiveness. Furthermore, they viewed that Turkey was unable to sustain simultaneously a considerable qualitative and quantitative improvement of its military establishment; at this point, quality should prevail over quantity. They also recommended that since the Turkish economy was

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<sup>535</sup> NATO/RDC/327/56, Menderes' reply to Bulganin's letter, 27-July-1956.

<sup>536</sup> NATO/C-R(56)23, 5-May-1956.

facing serious difficulties, Ankara should review its economic policy to ensure that its defence effort would be supported by a sound economic base.<sup>537</sup>

Meanwhile, a debate was taking place within the US government regarding the structure and size of the Turkish Armed Forces. By May 1956 Turkey's economic and financial situation had deteriorated significantly, because the Menderes government had failed to pursue simultaneously the vigorous rearmament and economic development programmes. Twice during the spring of 1956 the Americans had to bail out the Turks economically to enable the latter to supply oil and spare parts. John Foster Dulles and the Secretary of Defense, Charles Wilson, viewed that the whole question of US military aid programmes was in need of thorough review. In the recent past, the extensive military assistance was justified in the light of Soviet pressure applied to Greece, Yugoslavia, Turkey and Iran. However, it seemed that priority should be given to the building of economic – rather than purely military – strength around the periphery of the Soviet bloc. The current US military assistance programmes would strain the economies of such allies like Turkey. Therefore, a dilemma existed: either the Americans would have to commit and offer increasing aid to Turkey (and perhaps to other allies as well) for the middle or long-term, or else the Turkish military establishment should be cut down significantly. Of course, as Eisenhower and the Secretary of Treasury, George Humphrey, noted, it would have been difficult to convince the Turks to accept a reduction of their forces; Ankara was constantly pressing the Americans for additional military and economic assistance in order to raise more forces.<sup>538</sup> However, an increase in the size of Turkish Armed Forces would not only raise the cost of the US assistance programme, but would also

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<sup>537</sup> NATO/C-M(55)101, II, Annual Review 1955 – Turkey, 26-November-1955.

<sup>538</sup> DDEL/Whitman Files/NSC series, Box 7, 285<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 17-May-1956.

impose significant a burden on the Turkish economy. No decision could be reached during the following months and the debate continued in Washington.

As regards Italy, and in sharp contrast with its much poorer allies (Greece and Turkey), considerable shortfalls existed in the M-day and D-day forces of all services against the force levels envisaged in M.C.48. Only in the Navy the situation was relatively good. As in Greece and Turkey during the same period, Italian civilian and military leadership were undertaking a review of the country's defence programme. The most serious weaknesses in the Italian armed forces were shortages in materiel and inadequate logistic support. The Italian defence expenditures had remained below the level required to cover all the needs arising from the planned force goals. According to NATO officials, a considerable increase in the national defence budget appeared necessary to improve the effectiveness of the Italian forces. However, economic development should not be hampered and social stability should be maintained. Consequently, a limited increase might be possible. The Italians had to address many weaknesses of their military establishment. The most critical were the improvement of the air control and reporting system, the increase of jet fuel reserves, the further build-up of army M-day units and the implementation of the navy construction and modernisation programme. If substantial progress was not achieved in those (and other) fields, the NATO experts viewed that it would be impossible to maintain the Italian forces at combat ready status.<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>539</sup> NATO/C-M(55)101, II, Annual Review 1955 – Italy, 26-November-1955; NATO/C-M(56)132, II, Annual Review 1956 – Italy, 5-December-1956.



## ***Conclusion***

From late 1954 to the autumn of 1955 the whole defence posture of NATO's Southern Flank declined sharply; this deterioration continued until early 1959. The signature of the Bled Treaty in August 1954 and the normalisation of Italian-Yugoslav relations after the settlement of the Trieste issue in October 1954 seemed to foreshadow positive developments; a further strengthening of the Southern Flank at the Italian and Balkan frontiers could be expected. Things, however, evolved differently. Yugoslavia, facing a Soviet 'peace-offensive', preferred to normalise its relation with the USSR (though not with many satellites) and gradually distanced itself from the Balkan Alliance. Much to the Western powers' annoyance, it also avoided engaging in any military talks with NATO or US-UK-French officials. Therefore, the situation did not improve at the Italian frontier and it deteriorated significantly – as compared with 1953-54 – at the Balkan frontier, one of the most vulnerable fronts of NATO.

Of course, other cataclysmic events overshadowed these developments. The watershed in the decline of the Southern Flank and its ensuing destabilisation was the revival of the Greek-Turkish dispute, mainly due to the eruption of the Cyprus issue. When the Greek leadership, facing the intransigence of both the Churchill and Eden administrations, decided to apply pressure by bringing the issue at the UN, it had fully failed to take into account the strong Turkish interest. In essence, the Greek decision to internationalize the UK-Greek dispute on the future of Cyprus was ill-judged and proved ill-fated. Nevertheless, Turkish reaction to the application of the principle of self-determination which would inevitably lead to union with Greece was primarily based on 'security' concerns. Until September 1955, the Greek policy makers had failed to notice and anticipate the extent of Turkish anxiety and reaction – partly

because Turkey had accepted the incorporation of the Dodecanese islands to Greece in 1947.

However, things had changed by 1955. After Stalin's death, the end of the Korean War and Khrushchev's ascendancy into power, Cold War tensions had somewhat eased. Consequently, Ankara felt it could adopt a more 'Turkish' foreign policy, taking advantage of its increasing leverage within the Western powers, particularly Britain, due to recent developments in the Middle East. By 1955, Turkey appeared to be the cornerstone of defence both of South-eastern Europe and the Middle East: it was member of NATO, the Balkan Alliance and the Baghdad Pact, seemed internally stable, and was solidly pro-Western and firmly anti-communist, with an expanding military establishment. The Menderes government sought to capitalise on this growing Turkish importance even at sacrifice of the Greek-Turkish cordial cooperation. Perhaps when Turkey's potential and leverage vis-à-vis Greece increased, the Turks felt strong enough to revive gradually their antagonism with the Greeks. Unfortunately, due to lack of Turkish archival material the above argument cannot be proved. It is nevertheless true that from late 1954 onwards Turkey not only opposed Greek claims on Cyprus, but also raised other issues like the status of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace and Greek fishing rights in the Aegean. Furthermore, the Greek community in Istanbul was used as lever to press Greece, while even threats of war were voiced.

The Turkish attitude was encouraged not only by Greece's inability to confront the Anglo-Turkish alliance on Cyprus, but also because the United States and NATO failed to mediate timely and effectively. Of particular importance was NATO's unwillingness to condemn Turkey for the events of September 1955 in

Istanbul and Izmir. On the contrary, although the allies and NATO officials expressed their 'understanding' for the Greek reaction after the September outrages, they also pressed Athens to give way and resume as soon as possible its full participation in NATO activities. The demonstration of NATO's unwillingness and unpreparedness to intervene in the ensuing Greek-Turkish dispute had serious short and long-term repercussions. Therefore, the deterioration of Greek-Turkish relations continued until 1958, while serious crises would unfold between the two countries in the following decades. This proved to be the first rupture within the alliance, and a persistent open soar. Furthermore, NATO not only failed to solve this inter-allied dispute, but was also unable to devise appropriate mechanisms to avoid future intra-NATO crises which eventually undermined the cohesion of the alliance. Last but not least, a corollary to the above events which undermined stability in the Eastern Mediterranean was the rapid decline of the traditional British-Greek friendship (in essence, bilateral relations would never again be the same, even after British withdrawal from Cyprus), and the end of 'the golden era' of US-Greek relations. From 1955-6 onwards, a significant portion of the Greek public remained critical of US attitudes and policy, and, to some extent, doubtful of the benefits of participation in NATO. The seeds of anti-Americanism in Greece were sown exactly during this period.<sup>540</sup>

Despite the deterioration of Greek-Turkish relations and the relative relaxation of Cold War tension, both Athens and Ankara continued to place great emphasis on the maintenance of NATO solidarity, on the military preparedness of the alliance and on cooperation between NATO members on the political and economic fields. In spite of their huge defence effort and the continuing US aid, Greece and

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<sup>540</sup> On Greek anti-Americanism during this period, see Stefanidis, *Asymmetroi Hetairoi*, pp.305-9; Couloumbis, *Greek Political Reaction*, pp.93-97.

Turkey were unable to raise and maintain adequate forces to achieve a sufficient degree of security from Soviet-bloc aggression in case of war. The two countries fell short particularly in qualitative standards. Moreover, the dissolution of the Balkan Alliance and the rise of their antagonism redressed the local correlation of forces in Warsaw Pact's favour. Once again, no forward defence could be implemented at the Balkan frontier, and the Greeks and the Turks could merely depend on the US nuclear retaliatory force. However, no US or NATO forces with integrated atomic capability arrived in Greece or Turkey. On the contrary, the Italian front was reinforced considerably in 1955-6 due to the creation of SETAF. Consequently, Turkey hoped that the Baghdad Pact had enhanced the defence of its eastern borders, while Greece sought, and soon achieved to some extent, to replace the tripartite Balkan Pacts with a, de facto, bilateral military cooperation with Yugoslavia.

## **5. CONTINUING CRISIS AND NEW CHALLENGES, AUTUMN 1956 - AUTUMN 1957.**

The period between the autumn of 1956 and the autumn of 1957 proved a turning point in NATO history. At the political level, the NAC had authorized in May 1956 a committee on political cooperation and consultation within the alliance. This was comprised of the Foreign Ministers of Canada, Norway and Italy, Lester Pearson, Halvard Lange and Gaetano Martino respectively (who represented different political ideologies and geographic regions and had significant experience) and soon became known as the Committee of the Three Wise Men. The deteriorating situation in Cyprus and particularly in the Middle East (especially after the Suez crisis October-November 1956), in conjunction with the concurrent outbreak of the Hungarian revolution which aggravated East-West tension, provided a considerable spur to the work, and significance to the final proposals, of the Committee. NATO faced new challenges, experienced serious strains and had to reconstruct allied solidarity and cohesion. Although some steps were undertaken towards *non-committal* political consultation regarding 'Consultation on Foreign Policies' (outside the NATO area) and 'Peaceful Settlement of Inter-member Disputes', the United States as well as Britain and France opposed the idea of obligatory procedures for political consultation which would limit their freedom of action, particularly in the Third World.

Furthermore, the Americans opposed any expansion of NATO into the economic field, for fear they might have to undertake additional burdens.<sup>541</sup>

In any case, the idea of some form of consultation for the settlement of intra-NATO disputes was given – temporarily – some impetus in 1957, and Cyprus was an issue for such an initiative: the Secretary General, Lord Ismay, tried to offer his ‘good offices’ to conciliate between the three parties directly involved in the Cyprus dispute, while Spaak pursued more actively a stronger NATO role in decision making, but to no avail.<sup>542</sup> As for consultation on foreign policy matters, despite detailed discussion of the situation in the Middle East in the aftermath of the Suez and Syrian crises in 1956 and 1957, the alliance failed not only to implement, but even to form and adopt a comprehensive strategy – and this did not escape from Turkish notice. Interestingly, although literature on NATO has dealt to some extent with the alliance’s effort to broaden its scope to cover the political-economic field, tackle out-of-area problems and devise mechanisms for the solution of intra-NATO disputes, little has been written on the role of NATO in the Cyprus dispute, and even less, on NATO and the Middle East. But these issues affected to a significant degree the defence posture and the cohesion of the Southern Flank during this period.

On the military level, NATO was still unable to raise sufficient conventional ground forces to provide credible deterrence against a Soviet invasion in Western Europe or the Southern Flank. Obviously, the alliance could not rely exclusively on nuclear weapons. As the military theorist Sir Basil Liddell Hart wrote in March 1957, those made ‘sense as a deterrent, but not as a defence – for put into use it means

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<sup>541</sup> “‘Learning by doing’: Disintegrating Factors and the Development of Political Cooperation in Early NATO’, in Mary Anne Heiss and Victor Papacosma (eds.), *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intrabloc Conflicts* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2008), pp.43-57.

<sup>542</sup> Lawrence Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, pp.66-67.

suicide'.<sup>543</sup> Therefore, a revised NATO strategic concept was agreed in April/May 1957 (the M.C.14/2), which recognized the possibility of Soviet aggression with limited objectives; those should be dealt without recourse to nuclear weapons, if possible. Nevertheless, M.C.14/2 was the product of a compromise among various views, and, most importantly, could be interpreted differently.<sup>544</sup> Although there was an implicit recognition of the need for considerable conventional forces to retain NATO's flexibility in every contingency, mainly Britain but also the United States envisaged further cuts in their conventional forces. As regards the Americans, in response to the threat posed by tactical nuclear weapons they decided to reorganize their army units. This entailed a reduction in the numerical strength of their existing divisions (through the introduction of 'pentomic' divisions). Therefore, they managed to withdraw some troops from Europe.<sup>545</sup>

The Southern Flank was not affected by these developments, but naturally the US leadership wished to follow the general trend towards cuts by curtailing the military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey; thus, it considered that a significant reduction of the Greek and Turkish force levels was both desirable and sensible. However, US aid towards those countries was not reduced during this period, partly due to the recommendations of SACEUR and NATO officials, and partly because a reduction in US assistance would cause considerable damage to US-Greek and US-Turkish relations at a time when the strains of the Cyprus dispute were extremely strong. But even the flow of US hardware and funds was not sufficient to enable the

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<sup>543</sup> *The Times*, 26-March-1957.

<sup>544</sup> Duffield, *Power Rules*, pp.126-8; Dockrill, *Eisenhower's New-Look, 1953-61*, pp.207-8.

<sup>545</sup> Dockrill, *Eisenhower's New-Look*, pp.204-5. The 'pentomic' infantry division consisted of five combat groups, supported by five batteries of light artillery and by one Honest John battery capable of firing both conventional and nuclear warheads. It numbered 13,700 men compared with the 17,400 of the traditional infantry division.

Greeks and the Turks to modernize their obsolete equipment and at the same time expand their forces to reach the NATO-approved force levels. Even Italy, which had a stronger economic and industrial basis, was consistently unwilling to raise additional forces. In 1956-7 the three countries undertook military reforms and reorganisation programmes to improve the quality of forces in being and enhance their combat readiness, but it was obvious that their security problems were too complex to be addressed by military means alone. Moreover, we shall see how during this period several parallel developments (including out-of-area ones) contributed to a further emasculation of the Southern Flank and affected its political cohesion and military strength.

#### ***i) Regional developments in the Balkan frontier***

After the effective dissolution of the Balkan Alliance in 1955 the Greeks had been eager to maintain close cooperation with Yugoslavia on both the political-diplomatic and the military field. For their part, the Yugoslavs wanted to keep open channels with NATO and the West, and the best way to achieve it was by the establishment of a bilateral relationship with Athens.<sup>546</sup> Before the deterioration of the international situation in the autumn of 1956, Tito had been seeking to revive the Balkan Pact, at least in its non-military aspects. But Yugoslav-Turkish relations remained strained because Yugoslavia opposed the formation of military pacts in the Middle East (where Turkey had played a leading role) and favoured the application of the principle

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<sup>546</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.108.



of self-determination on Cyprus, while Ankara disapproved of Yugoslav neutralist orientation. Consequently, and gradually, the Yugoslavs understood that the most realistic policy was to establish a bilateral Greek-Yugoslav entente and in effect abandoned every effort for the revival of tripartite cooperation. In July 1956, during his visit in Corfu, Tito invited Karamanlis to pay an official visit to Belgrade.<sup>547</sup> The Soviet invasion in Hungary and the subsequent rise of tension in central and Eastern Europe alarmed Tito and gave an impetus towards a further development of Greek-Yugoslav relations. Although for about two years the Yugoslav leadership was experimenting with peaceful coexistence, the rapid deterioration of the international climate revived the sense of uneasiness. Furthermore, the Yugoslav leaders were publicly chastised by Moscow, and most sharply by Bulgaria and Albania, for the first time since 1953. Therefore, the establishment of a bilateral Greek-Yugoslav accord was desirable. This would serve as a tangible link with NATO and the western defence system.<sup>548</sup>

Karamanlis and the Greek Foreign Minister, Evangelos Averoff-Tossizza, visited Yugoslavia from 4 to 7 December 1956. This was the first visit of a Greek Prime Minister to Yugoslavia in the post-war period. The US government entrusted Karamanlis to explore Tito's views and intentions on significant international issues. Both the Greeks and the Yugoslavs stressed their close bonds and declared that their partnership was based on mutual respect and on the recognition of the territorial status quo. Furthermore, the two countries noted the feasibility of cordial cooperation between states with different political and socio-economic systems.<sup>549</sup> Karamanlis blamed the Turkish attitude for the 'stalemate' in the Balkan Alliance. He expressed

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<sup>547</sup> Iatrides, *Balkan Triangle*, p.175.

<sup>548</sup> *The Times*, 5 & 6-December-1956.

<sup>549</sup> *KKA*, 2, pp.217-8, 221-2.

the hope that tripartite cooperation would soon revive, but, if not, the bilateral Greek-Yugoslav relationship would remain strong and solid. The Yugoslav leaders stressed the need for the revival of the tripartite Balkan cooperation, but for the first time explicitly and publicly expressed their strong political support to Greece and their 'sincere sympathies' for the 'just demands of the population of Cyprus'.<sup>550</sup>

Then Tito said that he desired the establishment of 'very close (political and military) bonds' with Greece and Averoff assured him that 'the Greek Government considered the Balkan Pact to be still in force between their two countries'.<sup>551</sup> In principle, Greece preferred the reactivation of the tripartite Balkan Alliance, but Turkey had shown that it was not prepared to contribute to this end. The Yugoslav leadership recognised that Turkish participation was desirable but not a prerequisite for Greek-Yugoslav cooperation, which in any case should proceed.<sup>552</sup> Indeed, Karamanlis and Averoff placed emphasis entirely on bilateral relations with no particular reference to any Turkish role; thus the Balkan Alliance emerged even weaker and Turkish officials expressed their disappointment and displeasure at the bilateral Greek-Yugoslav rapprochement.<sup>553</sup> As regards the situation in the Middle East, both the Greek and the Yugoslav leadership criticised Turkish (and UK-French) policy and agreed that the Baghdad Pact had been a negative development and a destabilising factor: it caused additional tension in the region and was exacerbating division between the Arab countries.<sup>554</sup>

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<sup>550</sup> *KKA*, 2, p.224; TNA/FO/371/123860/RG10392/15, Belgrade to FO, No.838, 7-December-1956; TNA/FO/371/124284/RG10319/5, Belgrade to FO, No.172, 15-December-1956

<sup>551</sup> NATO/C-R(56)70, 11-December-1956.

<sup>552</sup> *KKA*, 2, p.232.

<sup>553</sup> TNA/FO/371/123860/RG10392/18, Belgrade to FO, No.850, 10-December-1956.

<sup>554</sup> *KKA*, 2, p.229.

The Greek government tried to take advantage of its emerging 'special relationship' with Yugoslavia to counterbalance Turkey's weight (so clearly demonstrated in the affairs of the Middle East) and enhance its own position within NATO. During the NAC Ministerial meeting held in mid-December 1956, Averoff informed the allies on Yugoslavia's wish to uphold its independence and establish a 'very close' bilateral partnership with Greece. He further said that Greece regretted that, with regard to Turkey the Balkan Pact was now in abeyance, but that state of affairs could not be remedied until a solution had been found to the Cyprus problem. Menderes reacted and said that the mention of the Cyprus issue by Averoff as, 'at least partly', propaganda. Moreover, the Turkish Prime Minister was annoyed at Turkey's marginalisation and alienation from the Balkan Pact.<sup>555</sup> He was also anxious to learn whether during recent Greek-Yugoslav talks the possibility was discussed of retaining the Balkan Pact on a bilateral instead of tripartite basis. Averoff responded that if the current difficulties in Greek-Turkish relations were removed, then the Balkan Pact could be revived in its tripartite form.<sup>556</sup> The other NATO members avoided intervening and once again no effort was made to reconcile Greek-Turkish differences.

In any case, the tripartite Balkan accord was not to be re-established. From early 1957 Greece and Yugoslavia formed a special bilateral partnership which included both political and military cooperation (which lasted until 1961). The Yugoslav Vice-Presidents Svetozar Vukmanovic-Tempo and Edward Kardelj visited Athens and held discussions with the Greek leadership in April and October 1957 respectively. During those meetings, the cordial bilateral relation was confirmed. Not

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<sup>555</sup> NATO/C-R(56)70, 11-December-1956.

<sup>556</sup> NATO/C-R(56)71, 12-December-1956.

even the resurrection of such a delicate issue as the Macedonian question by the British press (according to which, in the aftermath of a Khrushchev-Tito meeting which led to the ease of Soviet-Yugoslav tension, the Soviet General Staff had prepared a plan for the establishment of a unified Macedonia – incorporating the whole Greek, Yugoslav and Bulgarian Macedonia – and its annexation to Yugoslavia) could damage the close Greek-Yugoslav partnership. The Yugoslavs immediately reassured Greece that Belgrade respected Greek territorial integrity. The Greek and the Yugoslav press condemned the ‘British machinations’.<sup>557</sup> In any case, it seems that the whole story was exaggerated; there were no signs either that the Soviets tried to woo Tito by offering him Greek Macedonia or that the story was an official plot on behalf of the Foreign Office to impair the Greek-Yugoslav partnership. The latter was quite strong and also had a military dimension: in June and October 1957 military delegations of the two countries exchanged visits.<sup>558</sup> Greece informed the NATO allies on those discussions and about Yugoslav views on various issues of the Cold War agenda. Thus Athens sought to reassure the NATO allies in the face of recent Yugoslav conciliatory gestures to the USSR, explaining that Belgrade wished to maintain good relations with Moscow without departing from its complete independence from the two blocs.<sup>559</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> TNA/FO/371/130028/RG1081/2, FO Minute on Yugoslav assurances on Greek Macedonia, 5-August-1957; *The Times*, 5-August-1957; *KKA*, 2, p.393.

<sup>558</sup> TNA/FO/371/130049/RG1203/1, Belgrade to FO, 31-October-1957.

<sup>559</sup> TNA/FO/371/130026/RG10392/6, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.348, 31-October-1957.

## ii) *NATO and the Cyprus imbroglio.*

As from late 1956 onwards the Greeks were attempting to consolidate their position in the Balkans, the NATO Secretary General and the NAC meetings were preoccupied with an issue which continued to undermine the Southern Flank's political stability and defence posture: Cyprus. Indeed, NATO had not much focused on the Cyprus problem before December 1956 when its ministerial meeting discussed it at length.<sup>560</sup> Apparently, the fact that, in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis, an extensive debate took place on the Middle East situation, and on the design of a NATO mechanism for the peaceful resolution of intra-allied disputes, played a significant role. Soon afterwards Lord Ismay undertook an initiative for the first time. Ismay's successor, Paul-Henri Spaak sought to intervene more actively and during the summer and the autumn of 1957 tried to mediate to achieve a compromise solution. He proposed a plan for a settlement based on guaranteed independence of the island under the auspices of the interested parties and NATO. However, only Greece accepted the Spaak proposals in principle. In the face of Turkish and British opposition to his initiative, Spaak decided not to pursue it any further and made plain that that he would not engage NATO's reputation in any attempt to find a solution until he was confident that the attempt would be met with success.<sup>561</sup>

During the NAC Ministerial meeting held on 11 December 1956, the Cyprus issue was raised, first by Averoff. Then Menderes asked Averoff whether Greece wanted the Council to discuss that problem; in such a case, Greece would have to

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<sup>560</sup> During 1956 and until December the Cyprus issue had been raised only three times by the Greek permanent representative and it had not been discussed at length.

<sup>561</sup> For some material on the discussion of the Cyprus problem at NATO and the attitude of the parties concerned until August 1957, see TNA/FO/371/130139/RGC/1072/65, Galsworthy Minute on Previous History of Cyprus Question in NATO, 16-August-1957.

withdraw it from the UN agenda. Averoff responded that for both political and psychological reasons, it was difficult to withdraw the Cyprus problem from the UN. Greece was ready to discuss the issue in the NAC (indeed, as early as April 1956 Greece had appeared eager to solve the Cyprus problem 'on a friendly basis' within the Council); but this should not be conditional on its withdrawal from the UN agenda, since appealing to the UN was the only remedy left to the Greek Government. For his part, the British Foreign Secretary, John Selwyn Lloyd, argued that it was probably preferable to discuss the Cyprus issue in NATO than in the UN but considered that the time was not appropriate to bring it up; discussion should take place only after the new British initiative, the Radcliffe Plan<sup>562</sup> (which provided for the introduction of self-government), had been submitted and examined by the Greek and the Turkish leadership. Selwyn Lloyd also said that although Britain had a record of granting self-government and independence to its colonies for which it was 'justly proud', he insisted that Cyprus was a special case, due to its strategic position, which was 'not only of importance to NATO, not only of importance to the Baghdad Pact, but Cyprus is really for Turkey an offshore island covering the approaches to her southern ports'.<sup>563</sup>

The other NATO members appeared quite reluctant to get involved in the Cyprus question. For various reasons they believed that discussion on Cyprus should be postponed. The Canadian Foreign Secretary Lester Pearson believed that, in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis the NAC should demonstrate the cohesion and solidarity of the alliance, and any adverse signs might have serious repercussions on the public

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<sup>562</sup> This plan was prepared by Lord Radcliffe, who had been appointed constitutional commissioner in Cyprus on 12 July 1956. The Radcliffe Plan eventually provided for a unique innovation, that is double (or separate) self-determination on a communal (not territorial) basis.

<sup>563</sup> NATO/C-VR(56)71(Final), Verbatim Record of the 71<sup>st</sup> Council meeting, 12-December-1956.

opinion of the West. John Foster Dulles argued that the Cyprus problem was one of those highly complex ones (as was also the Baghdad Pact) which needed thorough study and expert advice; since most NATO delegations, including the US one, lacked such advice, it would have been unwise to try to solve such matters during that meeting. Apart from that, Dulles did not endorse too frequent consultation in NATO or excessive coordination on matters affecting friendly countries outside the NATO area, because that could impair friendly relations with those countries on some occasions.<sup>564</sup> The substance of Dulles' view was that the United States as well as Britain and France and other NATO powers were not willing to lose the independence of their national foreign policy by authorising a NATO body to coordinate allied policy outside the European theatre.<sup>565</sup> Indeed, even when other NATO members appeared to promote the idea of regular political consultation for out-of-area problems, they usually refrained from actually practicing it.<sup>566</sup>

For his part, the Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak suggested that a method of consultation in NATO regarding out-of-area problems should be devised before the alliance dealt with such issues like Cyprus. In any case, he felt that the alliance should 'take a lively interest' in any problem of importance to one or more state-members. Time should be allowed to see the effects of the Radcliffe proposals, and if Britain, Greece and Turkey continued to be unable to reach a satisfactory solution, then NATO, and not the UN, might be an appropriate forum for further discussion. Finally, the NAC's Chairman of the NAC, Gaetano Martino, suggested that after the Council had examined the procedure for the settlement of inter-member

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<sup>564</sup> NATO/C-R(56)71, 12-December-1956.

<sup>565</sup> Kaplan, *NATO and the United States*, pp.66-67.

<sup>566</sup> John Iatrides, 'Challenging the Limitations of the Atlantic Community; Konstantinos Karamanlis and NATO', in *Konstantinos Karamanlis in the Twentieth Century* (Conference, Zappeion, Athens; "Konstantinos Karamanlis" Foundation, June 2007), pp.17-36.

disputes proposed by the Committee of Three (The Three Wise Men submitted their report on political consultation on intra-allied disputes during this NAC meeting), the Cyprus problem could be brought up in NAC, if the three interested parties agreed. Obviously, most representatives were far more preoccupied with the deteriorating situation in the Middle East rather than with the dispute over Cyprus (for example, the French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau did not even mention Cyprus and focused exclusively on Suez, Egypt and the Middle East). It should also be stressed that several NATO members did not have any particular interest in the region and did not have any specific Middle Eastern or Mediterranean policy.<sup>567</sup> This is something one should always bear in mind, and that indifference of many European allies affected the Southern Flank's course in the 1950s.

During the following weeks, the Cyprus problem deteriorated further. The Radcliffe Plan indeed provided for prompt introduction of self-government, and for the application of self-determination in the future. Nevertheless, the British formula was essentially promoting partition, since in a unique innovation it granted the right of self-determination separately to the Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots as two distinct communities and not to the entire population as a whole or to specific districts (the population throughout the whole island was mixed, and no area had a Turkish-Cypriot majority). The British delegation informed NATO that 'in any eventual exercise of self-determination the Turkish Cypriots, equally with the Greek Cypriots, would have the right to decide their own future. Consequently, partition must be included among the eventual possibilities'. This made partition, decided by a vote of the minority, as the most likely solution of the problem. Naturally, the Turks

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<sup>567</sup> NATO/C-R(56)71, 12-December-1956.



expressed their support for the plan, while the Greeks regarded the plan as a constitutional fiction which could not serve even for a provisional solution.<sup>568</sup>

Meanwhile, on 14 December 1956 the NAC Ministerial Meeting had adopted a resolution on the peaceful settlements of disputes and differences between NATO members. The resolution empowered the Secretary General to 'offer his good offices informally at any time to governments involved in a dispute and with their consent'. On 15 March Lord Ismay sent identical letters to the Permanent Representatives of Britain, Greece and Turkey inquiring informally whether their governments would welcome his good offices. If the three interested governments responded positively in principle, the next step would be an exchange of views as to procedure. He proposed to invite three distinguished men from NATO countries other than Britain, Greece and Turkey but acceptable to them, to form a 'Commission of Good Offices'. That commission would suggest a peaceful solution to the Cyprus problem, which would be acceptable to the three governments concerned. Ismay also asked London, Athens and Ankara to contribute to the creation of a favourable atmosphere, if his proposal was approved.<sup>569</sup> It should be noted that, at British insistence, the Ismay initiative was an effort of conciliation, not arbitration.<sup>570</sup> Finally, Lord Ismay added that 'cessation of terrorism would be a prior condition for the exercise of NATO good offices'.<sup>571</sup>

By March 1957, the three countries directly concerned with the Cyprus problem seemed to have reversed positions: Britain and Turkey advocated a NATO intervention, while Greece rejected it. The other NATO allies favoured Ismay's

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<sup>568</sup> NATO/C-R(56)77, 21-December-1956.

<sup>569</sup> NATO/PO/57/339, Text of Letter from Lord Ismay to the Permanent Representatives of Greece, Turkey and the UK, 25-March-1957.

<sup>570</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Britain*, p.101.

<sup>571</sup> TNA/FO/371/130137/RGC1072/18, Sir Frank Roberts to FO, No 145, 2-March-1957.

initiative and Greece appeared isolated during the NAC meeting of 22 March on Cyprus. Indeed, the Greeks emphasized the need for the release of Makarios from exile and the resumption of direct negotiations between the British and the Cypriots. To most allies, the Ismay proposals were not only fully compatible with any British-Cypriot negotiations, but also would probably promote and facilitate them. In any case, the Ismay initiative should not be overestimated. The Secretary General himself emphasized the limited nature of his effort, as 'he had not opened the door but simply turned the key in the lock'.<sup>572</sup>

Britain and Turkey were in close contact, cooperation and mutual consultation to coordinate their tactics and to isolate Greece. The British and Turkish acceptance of Ismay's proposal was a tactical manoeuvre: no solution could come from NATO at that stage. When the US leadership exerted significant pressure to the new British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, to release Makarios, the British decided to do so. They expected that such a move would put Athens under strong US and allied compulsion to show more flexibility and moderation and accept Ismay's proposal.<sup>573</sup> But even if Greece rejected it as expected (admittedly, the cards were already heavily stacked against Greece in any NATO forum, as the British Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, acknowledged), the blame for blocking Ismay's initiative would lie 'squarely on the Greeks'. This was the real British (and Turkish) motive for supporting Ismay's proposal: 'our main objective is to establish the fact of Greek intransigence in the face of British conciliatory gestures, so as to show that there is nothing doing on the lines of the Radcliffe proposals and that the only hope is to get on to partition as soon as possible. In these circumstances continued Greek

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<sup>572</sup> TNA/FO/371/130138/RGC1072/32, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.191, 23-March-1957.

<sup>573</sup> TNA/FO/371/130138/RGC1072/33, Young Minute on Procedure for NATO Conciliation in Cyprus, 29-March-1957.

obduracy about the NATO procedure really suits us... When we do reach the partition stage it may well be that we should find a more real use for NATO'. The Foreign Office also stressed that Britain should do nothing to discourage Ismay's intervention for one additional reason: that was the first case of application of the Three Wise Men procedure; if it was to break down, this should not seem to be a Britain's fault, particularly since 'we have administered some shocks to NATO lately and it would be a pity for us to be responsible for any more'.<sup>574</sup>

At any rate, Greece politely turned down Ismay's offer and tried to circumvent the dilemma of either accepting a proposal of the (British) Secretary General for a NATO solution which would probably bring partition closer, or simply reject it, which would again mean that partition remained the most likely, if not the only, solution. Indeed, the Greeks sought to appear as unable to accept the Ismay proposal only 'in the present circumstances' and the NAC chose not to interpret the Greek negative reply as 'slamming the door against NATO arbitration'.<sup>575</sup> Averoff argued that until recently Greece had favoured the submission of the Cyprus problem to NATO, while in December 1956 he had asked for the appointment of the Committee of Three as arbitrators. Nevertheless, NATO had refused to deal with Cyprus and then Greece proceeded with taking the issue to the UN; so Greece now felt it would be improper to refer the problem to a different body (that is, NATO). In essence, the Greek government believed that a NATO initiative on Cyprus would not take into consideration the Greek position, or at least it would be less sensitive to Greek views than the UN; all NATO members had consistently voted against Greece in the UN, and therefore the Greeks could hardly regard NATO as an impartial body.

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<sup>574</sup> TNA/FO/371/130138/RGC1072/35, Young Minute on Tactics with the Greeks over Cyprus at NATO, 2-April-1957.

<sup>575</sup> TNA/FO/371/130138/RGC1072/31, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.105, 22-March-1957.

Furthermore, the Greek leadership feared that any negative – for Greek interests – policy adopted by NATO would exacerbate passions and anti-western sentiments in the Greek public and would complicate matters further.<sup>576</sup>

In contrast, Turkey's Permanent Representative Nuri Birgi tried to show that his country was concerned about – and worked for – the unity, cohesion and strength of the alliance, but reiterated Ankara's position that the Turkish Cypriots should be given the opportunity to exert the right of self-determination separately.<sup>577</sup> Obviously, this would lead inevitably to partition after extensive communal discord and violent transfer of population, since nowhere in Cyprus did the Turkish Cypriots constitute the majority. Meanwhile, the release of Makarios had a serious and unexpected repercussion: it infuriated the Turkish government and inflamed the Turkish public. The Turks were not ready to accept the prospect of resumption of negotiations between the British and representatives of the Cypriots, particularly Makarios. No plan envisaging the independence of Cyprus to the exclusion of partition would be acceptable to the Turks, who made plain that 'the time has arrived that the only possible solution was immediate partition'. This could be ultimately achieved through tripartite UK-Greek-Turkish consultations.<sup>578</sup> UK-Turkish relations deteriorated significantly, and the Turkish Press described the British attitude as 'betrayal of the Turkish cause on Cyprus'.<sup>579</sup> On the one hand London did not want to endanger the Anglo-Turkish cooperation, but on the other Ankara pulled back its support for self-government and asked for prompt partition. Thus, Britain's promises had been

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<sup>576</sup> NATO/C-R(57)29, 9-May-1957; TNA/FO/371/130138/RGC1072/42, Haylis Minute on Prospect of Greek change of attitude over NATO approach, 10-April-1957; TNA/FO/371/130139/RGC1072/51, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.336, 18-May-1957; also Iatrides, 'Challenging the Limitations', pp.17-36.

<sup>577</sup> NATO/C-R(57)29, 9-May-1957.

<sup>578</sup> TNA/FO/371/130138/RGC1072/38, Ankara to FO, No.362, 9-April-1957; TNA/FO/371/130138/RGC1072/36, FO to UK Delegation in NATO, No.523, 13-April-1957; also *The Times*, 15-April-1957.

<sup>579</sup> *The Times*, 18-April-1957.

misinterpreted and misused by Turkey, and the UK policy of full reliance to, and alignment with, Turkey, had eventually backfired: by mid-1957 the Greeks, Turks, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots all demanded British withdrawal from Cyprus.<sup>580</sup>

At the same time, Greek-Turkish relations reached a crisis point once again. Makarios arrived in Athens on 17 April and received an impressive welcome by the Athenians. In Turkey anti-Greek feelings soon culminated in the heavy criticism of the Ecumenical Patriarchate by the Turkish press and Menderes' accusations against Greece and Makarios. Turkey also handed a Note to the Greek government protesting at the official reception of Makarios in Athens; this was rejected as unacceptable. Simultaneously, fears were expressed over the eventual fate of the Greek minority in Istanbul and the Ecumenical Patriarchate.<sup>581</sup>

Indeed, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Zorlu, and Birgi informed the Greek chargé d'affaires in Ankara, and the NAC respectively, that the Turkish government 'could not restrain the rightful indignation and misgivings of the Turkish people in the face of Makarios' welcome in Athens', and ominously disclaimed 'all responsibility for the consequences on Turkish public opinion'. Most representatives of the NATO members and Ismay himself interpreted the above Turkish communication as a clear warning to Greece and the alliance that the Turkish authorities would not restrain the mob from violent anti-Greek riots. Therefore, Ismay summoned an emergency private meeting of the NAC and the NATO permanent representatives pressed 'impartially' both Turkey and Greece to show moderation. Nuri Birgi and the Greek Permanent Representative, Michael Melas had an emotional exchange. Finally, the NAC

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<sup>580</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Britain*, pp.106-7.

<sup>581</sup> *The Times*, 18 & 20-April-1957.

authorised Ismay to send an immediate message to both countries urging restraint.<sup>582</sup> Moreover, on 21 April Washington expressed its deep concern about the Turkish attitude towards Greece. Fearing that Menderes was about to ask for the removal of the Ecumenical Patriarchate from Istanbul, the Americans advised caution. In a formal demarche, the US government invited the Turks to facilitate a peaceful settlement of the Cyprus dispute.<sup>583</sup>

So long as the Cyprus problem was not resolved, the real British motives became increasingly clear to the others and therefore London's position was gradually weakened.<sup>584</sup> On 14 May Paul-Henri Spaak officially succeeded Lord Hastings Ismay as NATO Secretary General and tried to mediate for a compromise settlement of the Cyprus dispute. Spaak was more sympathetic to Greek and Greek-Cypriot views than Ismay and tried to allay Greek fears rather than satisfy Turkish demands.. In essence, the new Secretary General had similar views with the Americans on a possible compromise solution of the Cyprus problem, based on some form of guaranteed independence as the middle ground between *enosis* (union) and *taksim* (partition). In any case, Spaak was acting on his own, having in mind a settlement similar with the establishment of independent Belgium in 1830, and was not inspired or induced by Washington.<sup>585</sup> The Greek government, and Averoff in particular, also encouraged Spaak to find a solution somewhere between union and partition.<sup>586</sup> It seems that Spaak was worried that Britain might soon get fed up with the impasse in Cyprus and decide to disengage in a hurry, regardless of the consequences (as it did over India

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<sup>582</sup> TNA/FO/371/130138/RGC1072/43, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.123, 17-April-1957.

<sup>583</sup> *The Times*, 22-April-1957.

<sup>584</sup> NATO/C-R(57)29, 9-May-1957.

<sup>585</sup> TNA/FO/371/130139/RGC1072/59, Washington to FO, No.1319, 21-June-1957; also Holland, 'NATO', pp.33-61.

<sup>586</sup> TNA/FO/371/130139/RGC1072/51, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.336, 18-May-1957.

and Palestine in 1947 and 1948 respectively), leaving the Greeks and the Turks to decide the outcome. He therefore preferred to reach an accommodation as soon as possible.<sup>587</sup> For their part, the British were quite suspicious of Spaak's intentions. Their primary fear was that the Secretary General, who planned to visit Ankara and Athens during the summer, might reach an understanding with the Turks and the Greeks and present the British with a *fait accompli*. Spaak, however, reassured the British that his talks would be of a purely exploratory character.<sup>588</sup>

Spaak's initiative did not generate much support and in the face of the Syrian crisis of August/September 1957 as well as British and Turkish opposition to his basic idea, he suspended his action until November 1957. Then he resumed his action and proposed a plan providing for an independent Cyprus guaranteed by Britain, Greece and Turkey, but also by the United States and NATO. Cyprus would become a member of the Commonwealth and its independence would be restricted by various guarantees of its international status and its internal institutions. Spaak also envisaged the appointment of a NATO High Commissioner with significant powers of intervention.<sup>589</sup> Furthermore, the status of the protection of the Turkish Cypriot minority would be agreed by a special international accord and Cyprus could become a NATO member. However, the Spaak proposals did not find much support. Only Greece appeared ready to accept such a solution. The British rejected the Spaak proposals because Cyprus' guaranteed independence within the Commonwealth would create numerous difficulties – such unprecedented arrangement would be embarrassing in relation to other members of the Commonwealth: 'the very concept of Commonwealth membership envisages a *completely* independent status under

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<sup>587</sup> TNA/FO/371/130139/RGC1072/59, UK Delegation in NATO to Hayter (FO), 22-June-1957.

<sup>588</sup> TNA/FO/371/130139/RGC1072/51, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.193, 21-June-1957.

<sup>589</sup> TNA/DO/35/5253, Thompson Minute on Cyprus, 31-October-1957.

which the member country has the right to secede without conditions'.<sup>590</sup> In addition, the British were unwilling to recognise Makarios as the leader of an independent Cyprus. Until 1959 they thought that a solution based on 'guaranteed independence' was the worst of all possible outcomes – worse even than *enosis*: the FO argued that any form of independence would not be a permanent solution but would serve as a first step towards *enosis*, might lead to communist control of the island by AKEL (the strong left-wing Cypriot party) and, perhaps most significantly, would be unacceptable to the Turks.<sup>591</sup> Therefore, Britain opposed any actual NATO interference in Cyprus. Should NATO intervene, it would be almost certain that some form of 'guaranteed independence' would emerge.<sup>592</sup> For their part, the Americans, though sympathetic to the solution of independence, did not favour a US or NATO permanent entanglement in the island.<sup>593</sup>

By autumn 1957 the situation in Cyprus had deteriorated further, while the British were facing a desperate situation and tried to find a way out. High ranking Foreign Office officials started to take a very hard line, arguing that NATO's unity over Cyprus was a desirable but not essential prerequisite for a solution, since 'we might have to force through a solution that would risk driving either the Greeks or the Turks out of NATO'.<sup>594</sup> It was evident that Whitehall was seeking a solution which would satisfy Turkish requirements and that if an ally would be driven out of NATO, this would be Greece. Other voices even claimed that an active NATO mediation should be avoided, because if it took place, it would probably halt 'the advantage of

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<sup>590</sup> TNA/DO/35/5253, FO to UK Delegation in Paris, No.1135, 22-November-1957.

<sup>591</sup> TNA/FO/371/130139/RGC1072/59, FO to UK Delegation in Paris, No.586, 20-June-1957.

<sup>592</sup> Holland, 'NATO', pp.33-61.

<sup>593</sup> Iatrides, 'Challenging the Limitations', pp.17-36.

<sup>594</sup> Holland, 'NATO', pp.33-61.



bringing about that confrontation of the Greeks and Turks which is what we desire'.<sup>595</sup>

The continuation of Greek-Turkish antagonism would prevent a compromise between Athens and Ankara over Cyprus (which would probably lead to the end of UK sovereignty). Therefore, by autumn 1957 the British were eager to follow a policy of brinkmanship which might not only push Greece on the political periphery of the western world, but also jeopardise NATO's political cohesion and the Southern Flank's defence posture.

For their part, the Americans were much more concerned about the Alliance's cohesion. Alarmed by opinion polls demonstrating that neutralist sentiments in the Greek public tended to become persistent, they grew nervous about a breakdown over Cyprus. American officials considered that a US gesture might be necessary to 'save' Greece for the West.<sup>596</sup> However, the British sought to prevent a possible US intervention in Cyprus, replaced Governor Field Marshal Sir John Harding (who had failed to crack EOKA) with a political figure, Sir Hugh Foot, and prepared another plan for the settlement of the dispute. Subsequent developments will be analysed in the following chapter. Thus, by autumn 1957, NATO faced a fully fledged crisis over the Cyprus problem which threatened the solidity of the Southern Flank. As we shall now see, its military strength was already being undermined by defence costs.

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<sup>595</sup> TNA/FO/371/130139/RGC1072/66, Hayter comment in Addis Minute, 9-October-1957.

<sup>596</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, pp.68-69; Stefanidis, *Stirring*, pp.210-1.

### **iii) *The military-economic aspect of the Southern Flank's defence***

The NATO military situation in the Southern Flank remained problematic, particularly since the Italian, Greek and Turkish armed forces fell significantly behind the western qualitative standards, while Greek-Turkish cooperation had virtually terminated. Each country faced its own difficulties. For instance, in sharp contrast with its much poorer allies, Greece and Turkey, Italy was quite reluctant to undertake a major defence effort. Dulles had characterised Italy as the most elusive ally on military burden sharing, and complained that Rome led the way to turn NATO 'into an economic organization which can probably extract a little more money from the United States'.<sup>597</sup> For their part, NATO experts did not fail to notice that Italy could do more, allocating additional funds on defence and taking advantage of its industrial capacity.

In late 1956 considerable shortfalls still existed in the M-day and D-day forces of all services against the force levels envisaged in M.C.48; only in the Navy was the situation relatively good. As in Greece and Turkey during the same period, Italian civilian and military leadership was undertaking a review of the country's defence programme. The most serious weaknesses in the Italian armed forces were shortages in materiel and inadequate logistic support, and the ineffectiveness of the AC&R system. The Italian defence expenditures had remained below the level required to cover the whole of the needs arising from the planned force goals. To improve the effectiveness of the Italian forces, a considerable increase in the national defence budget appeared necessary. However, the NATO officials recognised that Italian economic development should not be hampered and social stability should be

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<sup>597</sup> Quoted in Brogi, 'Ike and Italy', pp.5-35.

maintained. Consequently, only a limited increase might be possible. In any case, the Italians had to address many weaknesses to maintain the effectiveness of the Italian forces.<sup>598</sup> In assessing Italian attitude, one could justifiably argue that the transfer of US land troops in northern Italy and the subsequent establishment and activation of SETAF with its integrated atomic capability in 1955-6, reassured the Italians. Never really eager to undertake a major rearmament bid, they found the opportunity to relax their defence effort.

In a January 1957 letter to the US Defense Secretary, the Italian Defence Minister asked for US land and air forces to be stationed in the Mediterranean, and particularly in Italy; possible new US land forces could be deployed in the Southern Italian peninsula, Sicily, or Sardinia.<sup>599</sup> Apparently, the reasons behind Taviani's proposal were the growing Soviet influence in the Middle East and the intensifying tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, the reassuring experience with US forces already stationed in Italy, and, last but not least, Rome's desire for a stronger, direct bilateral relationship with Washington.<sup>600</sup> Despite the implementation of the Italian reorganisation plan (the Mancinelli Plan) which aimed primarily at improving the effectiveness of M-day ground forces, there was a growing realisation that the Italian defence budget could not support the equipment and modernisation of all three services. It seems that the situation was relatively good in the air force, which at the end of 1957 totalled 438 aircraft, while its re-equipment with modern jet types was almost complete. The C&R system was still not fully effective though, despite serious effort to solve that issue. The NATO authorities recommended that Italy, with careful

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<sup>598</sup> NATO/C-M(55)101, II, Annual Review 1955 – Italy, 26-November-1955; NATO/C-M(56)132, II, Annual Review 1956 – Italy, 5-December-1956.

<sup>599</sup> NARA/RG59/A1.3096, Box 2, Taviani to Wilson, 11-January-1957.

<sup>600</sup> NARA/RG59/A1.3096, Box 2, Elbrick's Memorandum on Taviani's proposal that additional US Troops be sent to Italy, 14-January-1957.

management, should be able to increase its defence expenditures, since it had already managed to expand substantially its economy. A greater proportion of those increasing funds would have to be devoted to the provision of equipment, while maintenance and operation cost had to be maintained at current levels. Specific instructions referred to the need to continue the improvement of the AC&R system, to complete the personnel and equipment army build-up (with priority given to M-day units), to increase air force combat readiness, to improve D-day readiness of naval forces and implement their modernisation programme.<sup>601</sup>

Greece's and Turkey's cases were different. By late 1956, the Greek Army had managed to reach the NATO force objectives set in M.C.48 in terms of number and organisation, but not in terms of quality: there was a serious shortage of weapons and other material, of technicians and even of adequate number of regular soldiers and NCOs, while much of the equipment was obsolete. Moreover, ground forces-in-being provided only one-third of wartime strength and therefore Greek defence was largely dependent on the rapid and smooth mobilisation of the reserves; however, no effective training programme for the reserves existed to meet wartime strength requirements. The air force was slightly below the force goals but significant progress had been made in that service. Naval forces however were considerably weaker and most vessels were either obsolete or obsolescent; indeed, NATO experts acknowledged that one of the most serious and complex problems were the modernisation and replacement of obsolete naval units. Last but not least, the air control and reporting system remained inadequate. As a result of this situation, the Greeks reviewed their defence plans in consultation with the NATO military authorities to make the existing

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<sup>601</sup> NATO/C-M(57)143, II, Annual Review 1957 – Italy, 9-December-1957.

pattern of Greek forces more effective in view of the fact that M.C.48 force goals could not be fully achieved due to lack of equipment and adequate resources.<sup>602</sup>

During 1956-7, the Greeks continued to press the Americans for the provision of more military aid, particularly heavy equipment. During Karamanlis' visit in Washington in mid-November 1956 the Greek prime minister stressed that Greece's importance was not recognised adequately by the Americans and NATO, while the Turkish role was overemphasised. After Greece was admitted to NATO the country's defence position was improved due to its participation in a collective security pact, but from the strictly military point of view little progress had been made. Under existing conditions, in case of war the Greek Army would have to withdraw before advancing Bulgarian forces.<sup>603</sup> As the Chief of JUSMAGG admitted, in the face of much superior Bulgarian tank and combat air capability the Greeks could only put up a static defence in the event of war, and would therefore become a 'sitting duck' and suffer certain defeat.<sup>604</sup> Thus the Turkish forces defending Eastern Thrace and the Straits would be left without cover and would be outflanked by powerful Soviet bloc forces which would cut off any connection between Turkey and the Western powers. The collapse of the Balkan frontier would also affect seriously the defence of Eastern Mediterranean (and possibly the Middle East). It was therefore essential that a forward defence should be adopted in the Southern Balkans as well.

LANDSOUTHEAST military authorities had been talking with the Greeks from spring 1956 onwards about a more forward strategy, which could be implemented only if the Greek army's armour, firepower and mobility were

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<sup>602</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, p.590; NATO/C-M(56)132, II, Annual Review 1956 – Greece , 5-December-1956.

<sup>603</sup> *KKA*, 2, p.198.

<sup>604</sup> NARA/RG59/781.5/1-3157, Box 3726, Athens to State Department, 31-January-1957.

strengthened substantially. For instance, JUSMAGG's chief claimed quite accurately that 'Greece's real need is the capability of staging counterattacks', since 'both the equipment and the terrain preclude any responsible military acceptance of "forward strategy"... to defend Thrace and Macedonia'.<sup>605</sup> Indeed, a constant Greek demand was the formation of a Greek armoured division plus the delivery of sufficient number of modern anti-tank guns, and also the reinforcement of the Greek Navy by the provision of modern naval units. After all, those requests had been approved or proposed by SHAPE, while until that point Greek armed forces had successfully absorbed US military hardware (particularly in the air force). Finally, the Greeks explained that if the above requests were fully met, the additional maintenance and training cost was estimated at \$13 million per year. Since increasing the Greek military budget was out of the question, Greece would need additional aid if new hardware finally arrived. The American officials acknowledged the heavy burden of the Greek defence effort and indicated that at least some of the Greek requests needed to be fulfilled.<sup>606</sup> The US Embassy in Athens also judged that the Greeks were making a respectable effort to improve their military establishment; in essence, no difference of opinion existed between US and Greek military as to the need for more armour in northern Greece; it was just 'a question of how much and how readily any given new equipment can be assimilated'.<sup>607</sup>

In February 1957, the Greek leadership in consultation with NATO military experts and officials decided to undertake military reform. A redeployment of forces occurred, the numerical strength of M-day divisions was raised through divisional

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<sup>605</sup> Ibid.

<sup>606</sup> *FRUS* 1955-57, XXIV, p.574; *KKA*, 2, pp.198, 256.

<sup>607</sup> NARA/RG59/781.5/1-3157, Box 3726, Athens to State Department, 31-January-1957; *KKA*, 2, p.256.

reorganisation and a modest manpower increase. The Greek divisions stationed in northern Greece were reinforced with additional tank, artillery, infantry and support units, while their operational readiness increased. In addition, the air force and anti-aircraft defence was strengthened by the construction of new radar installations. The reform took place partly due to reports that the operational readiness and combat capabilities of the Bulgarian armed forces had increased considerably during the previous months. Perhaps more alarming was the fact that Bulgarian facilities and installations were greater in number and bigger than justified by the needs of the Bulgarian forces; apparently, they were designed to support additional, probably Soviet, forces, in case of conflict.<sup>608</sup>

During the following months, as the delivery of military hardware (especially *M-47* tanks, and artillery) by the Americans was increased, the Greek Army was able to form, for the first time, an armoured division (the XX). It should be noted that by US standards the XX division was not an armoured division, but rather an armoured brigade. Nevertheless, its formation, and the 1957 reform in general, constituted a turning point in Greek defence policy, since the actual defensive power of the army was almost doubled, while for the first time the country obtained the – minimal – means to counterattack.<sup>609</sup> In regard to the reinforcement of the Greek Navy, CNO Arleigh Burke informed the Greek leadership during his summer 1957 visit in Athens that the Americans would grant two destroyers, two submarines and some other minor naval units.<sup>610</sup> Although from the military point of view those developments should not be overestimated, the effect on morale was disproportionate; the Greek political

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<sup>608</sup> *KKA*, 2, pp.274-5.

<sup>609</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, pp.71-72.

<sup>610</sup> *KKA*, 2, p.383.

and military leadership and the press appeared much more optimistic about Greece's ability to confront Bulgaria in case of conflict.<sup>611</sup>

At any rate, despite the increase of military potential and preparedness of the Greek Armed Forces, the Greek security problem remained unsolved. In March and August 1957 US experts viewed that although Greece's primary NATO mission in case of war was to provide maximum forward defence against Soviet attack and assist in defending the Straits, Greek forces would only be able to provide limited defence against a satellite (that is, Bulgarian) attack, but just 'a relatively brief delaying action against a joint Soviet-satellite attack'. The Greek defence effort had been remarkable and it was acknowledged that the country's contribution to NATO's defence was beyond its ability to pay, since the country devoted 5 to 6 per cent of its GNP, or 30 per cent of its annual budget, to defence. In spite of those efforts and considerable US military and economic aid, the flaws of the Greek military establishment persisted.<sup>612</sup> The most serious problem was the inadequacy of command communications. That was a 'critical weakness' which 'prejudiced the entire national defence system' and the Greeks had asked for international financing of their installations. Progress had been made in the stocking of ammunition, the replacement and modernisation of light armament, the effectiveness of M-day forces; in addition, a modest increase of the navy's strength and a further advance of the air force's capabilities took place. It was estimated that by 1960 the Greek reorganisation programme would further increase the power and flexibility of the land forces. To that end, and to remedy the existing qualitative and quantitative deficiencies (such as the improvement of the air defence and the command and communications systems, the readiness of the naval forces and

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<sup>611</sup> *Kathimerini*, 17-February 1957; Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.72.

<sup>612</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, p.590; *KKA*, 2, pp.289-92.



the further build-up of M-day land forces) the NATO military authorities viewed that Greece would have to increase its defence expenditure. US military aid should be therefore increased, otherwise serious difficulties would ensue.<sup>613</sup>

For their part, however, and as NATO strategy evolved and increasingly placed emphasis on quality instead of quantity, in late 1957 US officials started to consider a reduction in NATO-approved Greek force levels (mainly in the army). The creation of a smaller but more effective military establishment might be possible, particularly with the prospect of the introduction and integration of ‘advanced weapons’ (including tactical atomic ones) in the Greek armed forces. Emphasis should be given to the improvement of the latter’s combat effectiveness, whether a reorganisation and reduction took place or not. The ultimate goal was to encourage Greece to assume a larger share of its total military budget and gradually move ‘toward a greater degree of military self-sufficiency’, especially as the country’s GNP grew. It was estimated, though, that such a development was not visible or possible in the near future, as it was highly unlikely that the Greek government could increase the country’s own defence expenditures.<sup>614</sup>

Athens however was seeking to speed up its economic development programme and secure increased US military aid. Finally, in August 1957 Washington decided to support the approved Greek force levels for 1958. In addition to the provision of conventional equipment, the US authorities would also consider delivering atomic-capable weapons systems, ‘predicated upon [Greek] desire and ability to absorb, train with and maintain such systems... and, if applicable, upon the granting of atomic storage rights to the United States’. Furthermore, the possibility of

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<sup>613</sup> NATO/C-M(57)143 II, Annual Review 1957 – Greece, 9-December-1957.

<sup>614</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, p.605.

achieving a reduction in the country's NATO-approved force levels would be reviewed in the future, in phase with the effective integration of 'advanced weapons' in the Greek Armed Forces.<sup>615</sup> However, as recent literature has already revealed, the overall US assistance to Greece (economic and, particularly, military aid) rose significantly in 1957-60 – truly, the country was treated quite favourably by the United States when compared with other NATO members, partly as a means to contain increasing anti-western sentiments due to the Cyprus problem.<sup>616</sup>

As regards Turkey, at the end of 1956 Turkish land and naval forces generally met in terms of numerical strength the M.C.48 goals. Air force goals fell short, though. The NATO officials acknowledged that Turkey was making a substantial effort. Nevertheless, despite the progress already made, the Turkish armed forces suffered from serious deficiencies. The most critical was the inadequate air control and reporting system and national communications network. In addition, the Straits defence system remained weak, most naval units were obsolescent or obsolete, serious shortage of equipment reserves in all three services existed, while the number of regulars serving in the army was insufficient. A reorganisation programme was designed to improve the quality of forces in being, and expand the air force.<sup>617</sup> The NATO military authorities recommended that, if the Turkish defence plans were to be fully implemented, further increases in the national defence budget would be required. However, Turkey was already devoting significant resources to its military effort and the Turkish economy experienced a balance of payments deficit; thus any increase in

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<sup>615</sup> DDEL/Whitman Files/NSC series, Box 9, 333<sup>rd</sup> NSC Meeting, 1-August-1957.

<sup>616</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, pp.89-90; Stelios Zachariou, 'The Road to Garrison State: An Overview of Greek-American Relations, 1952-1963', *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, 14/15 (1998/9), pp.241-60.

<sup>617</sup> NATO/C-M(56)132, II, Annual Review 1956 – Turkey, 5-December-1956.

defence expenditures should be limited to a level consistent with monetary stability.<sup>618</sup> Therefore, the Turkish and the Greek armed forces were facing analogous challenges, suffered similar deficiencies and had to address comparable problems.

Meanwhile, a debate was taking place within the US government regarding the structure and size of the Turkish Armed Forces. From the mid-1950s, the Turkish economy was facing increasing difficulties due to the pursuit of vigorous but unorthodox development policies (in conjunction with relentless defence spending).<sup>619</sup> In March 1957 the Defense Secretary, Charles Wilson, claimed that, in view of the increasing difficulties of the Turkish economy and of the American unwillingness to offer additional aid, the Turks might be better off with a smaller, 'elite' force. Of course, as both Eisenhower and the National Security Advisor, Robert Cutler, pointed out, it would be almost impossible to achieve the creation of an elite force in Turkey due to the low level of education there. In any case, Eisenhower stated that the Turks should take certain steps to stabilise their economy, or else future US aid would be futile. General Nathan Twining, the USAF Chief of Staff, thought that the Turks would be able to proceed with only a slight reduction of their existing forces. The NSC envisaged that if changes in Turkish force levels were to be contemplated, they would have to be negotiated through NATO channels. Then, Twining was authorised to ask SACEUR Norstad to try to convince the Turks to accept lower force levels for their armed forces; this could be combined with a possible incorporation of 'advanced

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<sup>618</sup> Ibid.

<sup>619</sup> Mustafa Aydin, 'Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Changing Patterns and Conjunctures during the Cold War', *Middle Eastern Studies* 36/1 (January 2000), pp.103-139.

weapons' (*Nike-Ajax* A/A missiles, *F-100* fighters and *Honest John* tactical nuclear rockets) to the Turkish armed forces.<sup>620</sup>

The stationing of a US ground task force with an atomic capability in Turkey (as well as in Greece) to augment sense of security in those two countries was also considered from spring 1957 onwards. The atomic weapons involved would be defensive (i.e. *Honest John* and *Corporal*), but any such deployment would have various political implications. Before any final decision was taken, the social and economic impact in Turkey and Greece should be appraised, and the effect on the other NATO allies and on the Soviet attitude should be assessed. Particularly, if the USSR perceived such deployment as offensive in nature and reacted by staging Soviet troops in Bulgaria, this might offset the advantages of the proposed US deployment.<sup>621</sup> In any case, the debate within the US administration and NATO continued for many months, and we will deal in detail with this matter in the following chapter.

For his part, Norstad was aware that NATO had somewhat different security requirements and diverse priorities than Washington. He therefore answered to the JCS that he did not consider as practicable or desirable, at least for the time being, to propose a reduction of NATO-approved Turkish force levels; such a proposal would have repercussions on the military, political and psychological fields. Admiral Arthur Radford, Chairman of the JCS, concurred with Norstad, and claimed along with John Foster Dulles that US assistance to Turkey was 'one of the better bargains for our money'. Eisenhower and Wilson did not deny that, but were still worried about the

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<sup>620</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, pp.708-9.

<sup>621</sup> NARA/RG59/A1.3096, Box 2, Deployment of ground atomic delivery forces in Greece and Turkey, 13-3-1957, and Memorandum on Probable Sino-Soviet Reactions to US Deployment of Nuclear Weapons Systems, 10-June-1957.

incurring costs and viewed that Turkey might get along better with a smaller and more efficient force. Finally, the Americans decided to support the NATO-approved Turkish force levels for the time being, but left the door open for their revision in the future.<sup>622</sup>

In December 1957 NATO concluded, that ‘notwithstanding Turkey’s allocation of so large a part of her national budget to defence and the generous scale of aid which she has received, particularly as regards equipment, it is difficult to see how available financial resources can keep pace with the constant rise of operating costs as efforts are made to modernise her armed forces’. The Turkish Army’s personnel situation remained unsatisfactory, especially regarding the shortage of technicians and specialists; considerable deficiencies in equipment and a lack of reserves in ammunition and POL also existed. The Turkish Navy (comprised of 26 major and 36 minor vessels at the end of 1957) had improved to some extent the training and manning levels. However, it suffered from inadequate communications and electronic capabilities and inefficient logistic support, while many ships were obsolete. As regards the Turkish Air Force, in late 1957 it consisted of 459 aircraft. During 1957 the aircraft combat readiness rate had improved, but shortages in officers and technicians existed, and the C&R system was inefficient. NATO officials did not envisage a further increase in Turkish military effort because that might cause undesirable economic consequences. Despite this, the Turkish leadership planned an increase in the three services, but that seemed unrealistic, unless the US aid expanded considerably. On the contrary, the trend was that Turkey could hardly maintain its existing level of forces and bring them to the required qualitative standards. The International Staff recommended that the Turks should focus primarily their effort on

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<sup>622</sup> DDEL/Whitman Files/NSC Series, Box 9, 328<sup>th</sup> NSC Meeting, 26-June-1957.

improving the efficiency of the AC&R system and the command communications network, on developing a joint and effective defence system for the Straits area and on building up personnel and equipment in army M-day units.<sup>623</sup> The low level of education and technical training in the country continued to impede the absorption of additional and modern materiel. The United States finally decided to provide 'advanced weapons' to Turkey which were considered as essential to accomplish the latter's NATO mission; nevertheless, Turkey's limited technical capabilities to absorb such weapons was taken into consideration.<sup>624</sup>

Taking the above into consideration, one can argue that during this period the Turkish leadership had adopted a specific national security policy, which was not always in full conformity with NATO priorities: notwithstanding the mounting economic strains, the expansion of Turkey's military establishment should be achieved at any cost (pleading its NATO role and 'NATO force goals'), and a vigorous, active policy should be implemented in the Middle East to strengthen the Baghdad Pact. The ultimate goal was to improve Ankara's status as an ally of the United States and Britain, both in the Middle East rather than in NATO context. Thus, the Menderes government aimed at extracting additional US financial and military aid and securing firm UK political support to Turkey both in Cyprus and the Middle East.<sup>625</sup>

Turkish policy achieved some success, since Ankara's potential significance and influence on certain Middle East countries was recognised by Washington. Meanwhile, after the proclamation of the Eisenhower Doctrine in early 1957, the

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<sup>623</sup> NATO/C-M(57)143, II, Annual Review 1957 – Turkey, 9-December-1957.

<sup>624</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, p.724.

<sup>625</sup> For American views on Turkish aims, see *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, p.733

Turkish policy makers saw an additional opportunity to receive additional US military and economic assistance. In March 1957 Menderes stressed that although his country was ‘not trying to get lion’s share’, he viewed that the United States ‘should look to [assist] declared friends first’ in its effort to enhance Middle Eastern security. Moreover, he once again called for US adherence to the Baghdad Pact. Turkish expectations were generally not met, although a squadron of modern *F-100* aircraft was granted by the Americans as first step towards the modernisation of the Turkish Air Force, enabling it to expedite transition to modern interceptor types.<sup>626</sup>

As the US and NATO strategy evolved and tended to rely increasingly on nuclear weapons (particularly tactical nuclear ones), paving the way to the adoption of the M.C.70 document (which will be analysed in the next chapter), Eisenhower remained adamant that the Turkish military establishment should be reduced in the near future and place emphasis on quality. This time he was supported by Radford. The President argued to Norstad that the Turkish Armed Forces had to accomplish the same task as in the early 1950s; nevertheless, despite their modernisation and the protection afforded by NATO and the US nuclear umbrella, Turkey’s force levels had increased considerable. Eisenhower believed that this represented ‘an illogical end result which requires careful reappraisal’. US resources should be applied in such a fashion as to achieve the greatest possible security for least cost, and the Americans should ‘insure that our military assistance programs measure up to the facts of life’. Eisenhower openly questioned the wisdom of keeping conventional forces of such size in Turkey and other countries with similar problems (like Greece), whose maintenance demanded extended US support. Highly expensive and complex modern

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<sup>626</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, pp.711-2.

equipment should not be granted if the recipient country was not capable of its employment and maintenance. Eisenhower therefore insisted that a reappraisal of US/NATO policy might be possible, if not essential, leading to a reduction of allied indigenous forces supported by the US aid. These allies (like the Greeks and the Turks) whose economies could not sustain their current military establishments should be persuaded to rely more on the US nuclear capability to protect them from attack. Then, phased force reductions should follow, and smaller, yet more effective armed forces, should be developed. On the other hand, the United States and NATO should not let the prosperous European allies to reduce their own defence effort to raise adequate conventional forces; NATO had to be able to apply limited force effectively 'to avoid local hostilities broadening into general war'.<sup>627</sup> Norstad replied that a reduction in Turkish force levels might be possible in the following years, but explained that Turkey would not be able to support its military establishment by its own means in the foreseeable future.<sup>628</sup>

Therefore, during 1957 the Eisenhower Administration envisaged a reduction of the Greek and the Turkish force levels. The US officials did not want to support indefinitely the defence establishments of Greece and Turkey. The two allies were the poorest in NATO, yet both were frontline states which had undertaken substantial defence spending, sometimes in sharp contrast with many advanced allies which were unwilling to bear the burden of rearmament. In any case, Eisenhower was probably right in his conviction that in the long-run the creation of a sound economic basis was essential to sustain a prolonged defence effort, and that the Turks and the Greeks should become self-sufficient in the short or middle term; the Americans would soon

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<sup>627</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, pp.728-9; the draft letter was prepared by Admiral Radford and can be found in NARA/RG218/E.UD50, Box 17.

<sup>628</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, pp.731-2.



be unable or unwilling (particularly the Congress) to support extensively the Turkish and Greek armed forces, at least regarding the provision of economic aid. The problem was more acute for Turkey, because not only was the Menderes government constantly pressing for more military and economic help and pursued relentlessly a vigorous rearmament programme, but also because the Turkish economy was facing enormous difficulties. It is interesting to point out that due to those difficulties (largely caused by huge defence expenditure) Turkey became more susceptible to Soviet offers for economic cooperation and trade agreements. Of course, by entertaining the possibility of a Soviet-Turkish detente, the Turkish leadership also sought to take advantage of the relative relaxation in East-West tension to increase Turkey's manoeuvrability and bargaining power with the United States.<sup>629</sup>

In any event, irrespective of US views and NATO needs, the Turkish political and military leadership was definitely unwilling to change the country's military system which provided for universal conscription, long period of service and an emphasis in the size of the armed forces. The Turkish Armed Forces should be large enough to be able to cope simultaneously with a two or three-front offensive developed on two or even three major theatres of operations (Eastern Thrace, north-eastern Turkey, and perhaps south-eastern Turkey as well). Apart from the military considerations, national service and universal conscription also served important political purposes: there was an educational aspect (many young Turks were illiterate and had the opportunity to remedy this failing and even acquire some technical skills

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<sup>629</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, p.733.

during their military service); the integrative function (particularly regarding the Kurdish population) was equally significant.<sup>630</sup>

However, Eisenhower's views were somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, he requested a US and NATO policy reappraisal towards Turkey and Greece, claiming that the two countries should be convinced to rely primarily on the US nuclear deterrence. On the other, he emphasised that the other European allies should not loosen their defence effort, because NATO should be able to deal with local crises without resorting to nuclear weapons. However, except for West Berlin, the most vulnerable part of the alliance was the Greek and Turkish territory, Thrace in particular. This is why Turkish and especially Greek officials were so worried about the defence of their territory in case of a local or international crisis. Without sufficient conventional forces, the Warsaw Pact forces could quickly break through Greek or Turkish positions. Then, the Americans and NATO would either not dare to support actively their allies, or have no option but to cross the nuclear threshold by launching tactical nuclear weapons on Greek and/or Turkish territory to stop the advance of Soviet forces. Therefore, it was obvious that Greece and Turkey were the allies who needed most desperately powerful conventional forces to deter, or defend themselves against, a Soviet attack.

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<sup>630</sup> For some similar arguments, see Ali Karaosmanoglou, 'Turkey and the Southern Flank: Domestic and External Contexts', pp.287-353, in John Chipman (ed.) *NATO's Southern Allies: Internal and External Challenges* (London & New York: Routledge, 1988), pp.287-353.

**iv) *A new frontier in the South-east? The Suez Crisis, the rise of 'positive neutralism' in the Middle East, and the Syrian Crisis, October 1956-November 1957***

The Suez crisis of 1956 created unprecedented difficulties for intra-alliance relations in NATO, principally between the United States, Britain and France, but it also had significant ramifications for the Southern Flank. Amid the crisis the United States did not hesitate to take military measures as well. Following the eruption of the Suez Crisis, the US Sixth Fleet, comprised of its main units (the carriers *Randolph* and *Coral Sea*, plus cruisers and destroyers) sailed eastwards midway between Cyprus and Suez and then stood off the Egyptian coast. The primary aims of the Sixth Fleet were the following: it should be ready to undertake action in case the crisis expanded into a major conflict, help in the evacuation of American citizens from Egypt and Israel, try to restrain the actions of the belligerents (particularly Britain, France, and Israel), and keep the Soviets away. Indeed, the Sixth Fleet proved an effective stabilising factor without interfering actively, although it was obvious that it would take action should it become necessary. The US naval aviation could have easily assumed air superiority against either the British-French-Israelis or the Soviets. Therefore, the Sixth Fleet proved a valuable and flexible asset serving US diplomacy which finally managed to control the situation.<sup>631</sup> This was the first time that the US Sixth Fleet undertook what was later called an 'out-of-area' operation. Until the fall of 1956 its duty was to support the right flank of US forces in Europe, deter Soviet aggression in the Mediterranean and, to the extent possible, contribute to the defence of Italy, Greece and Turkey. However, the 1956 crisis initiated a period when the Sixth Fleet became involved increasingly in the affairs of the Middle East, intervening actively in the

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<sup>631</sup> Joseph C. Wylie, 'The Sixth Fleet and American Diplomacy', *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 29/3 (1969), pp. 55-60; Kennedy Jr., 'The Creation', pp.304-326.

Lebanon civil war in 1958 and the Arab-Israeli Wars of the Six Days in 1967 and Yom Kippur in 1973.

The Suez Crisis sparked a significant increase of anti-western sentiments in the Arab world and created a deep, though rather temporary rift between the Americans, on the one hand, and the British and French, on the other. The Soviets began to intervene actively in the politics of the Middle East presenting themselves as a staunch supporter of the forces of decolonisation and anti-Western nationalism.<sup>632</sup> They were ready to help left-leaning nationalist regimes and sought to enhance their diplomatic, economic and military position, particularly in Syria and Egypt. Soviet presence and influence in those countries meant that the USSR might find an additional route to threat the Southern Flank of NATO, through Syria which bordered with Turkey or through the stationing of Soviet naval and air forces in the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. From late 1956 NATO officials began to consider and assess the extent of this possible new threat to the Southern Flank.

Naturally, Turkey was highly concerned about the trends and policies of the USSR in the Middle East. In the aftermath of the Suez Crisis the Turks officially asked NATO to examine the situation in the region ‘in a continuous manner’, assess any repercussions on the alliance’s defence plans and ‘make the necessary adjustments’ to them. Ankara focused on developments taking place at its south-eastern borders, in Syria. In early December 1956 the Turkish Acting Foreign Minister Ethem Menderes submitted a memorandum to the NAC, calling NATO’s attention to the Soviet aim to ‘encircle and out-flank the South Eastern NATO area’. According to the Turks, the situation in Syria was deteriorating; although the arms

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<sup>632</sup> Winrow, *Dialogue with the Mediterranean*, p.54.

delivered by the USSR had been fewer than was initially estimated, Ankara believed that the military build-up would continue and that Soviet influence would rise significantly. The Turks proposed the establishment of an appropriate link between NATO and the Baghdad Pact, and the latter's reinforcement to the maximum extent.<sup>633</sup>

In any case, Ankara was not alarmed mainly at the thought of existing Syrian military potential or of immediate threat of war, but at the possibility of Syria becoming an advance post for Soviet might in the Middle East. The US, UK and French representatives concurred with this estimate; NATO could not disassociate itself from developments occurring in non-NATO areas. Italy expressed its concern about recent events in the Eastern Mediterranean while Greece hoped that differences between NATO members throughout the Middle East would be solved.<sup>634</sup> During conversations with US officials, the Turkish leaders appeared worried that the Soviets aimed at encircling Turkey and executing a pincers movement through Thrace, the Caucasus and Syria. They argued that the main Soviet intention was to descend into the Mediterranean and interdict or cut allied lines of communication.<sup>635</sup>

In December 1956, the first of a series of Standing Group reports on the issue was written. It argued that the stocks of military equipment built up until that point in Syria and Egypt were meant to be used only by the Syrian and Egyptian forces. Those forces did not present any military threat to NATO, although that could change in the future if the trend continued, particularly if along with increased arms and equipment the Soviets sent also a force of 'volunteers'. The latter was considered

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<sup>633</sup> NATO/C-M(56)139, Memorandum by the Turkish Delegation on the Soviet Threat to the South Eastern Flank of NATO in the Middle East, 10-December-1956.

<sup>634</sup> NATO/C-R(56)61, 1-December-1956.

<sup>635</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, p.700.

unlikely for the time being, but Soviet advisors were already present in both Egypt and Syria. At any rate, direct Soviet intervention in the Middle East by Moscow was regarded unlikely. However, the existence in the Middle East of a force equipped with Soviet arms and possibly directed by Soviet experts would clearly intensify the potential Soviet bloc threat to the Southern Flank by various ways. It would increase the vulnerability of NATO lines of communication in the Mediterranean and enable the Soviets to establish military bases in the region, thus outflanking NATO. Moreover, if the USSR managed to deny Middle Eastern oil to the West, it would deliver a severe blow to the overall NATO military potential.<sup>636</sup>

Meanwhile, in November 1956 US policy makers were highly concerned over the defence of eastern Turkey, particularly over the situation of the air defence. Admiral Radford explained that the Turkish radar equipment was obsolete and entirely inadequate, while the *F-84s* of the Turkish Air Force could not intercept late-model Soviet aircraft flying in high altitude. These flaws were critical, since there were unconfirmed reports of Soviet overflights across the Turkish air space. The JCS favoured the transfer of USAF fighters into the Adana base in southern Turkey. Radar with higher and wider coverage and modern interceptors were needed to enhance the air defence of Turkey and other areas of the Middle East. Furthermore, Radford pointed out that under existing arrangements the air defence of Turkey had been handed over to NATO, and the NATO commander responsible (SIXATAF's commander) was an US officer. Therefore, Radford implied that the Americans had also a moral obligation to reinforce the Turkish air defence. However, State Department officials considered that USAF should not undertake additional

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<sup>636</sup> NATO/S.G.255, Report to the NAC on the Military Threat to NATO's Southern Flank, 6-December-1956.

operations in Turkey. The NAC would be greatly concerned over the prospect of NATO assuming additional responsibility for the territorial defence of individual member states to the exclusion of national authority. Some member-states would probably oppose such a measure, for fear it would lead to action triggered by some local situation rather than on an Atlantic-wide issue; if the US military considered the placement of additional equipment to Turkey as necessary, this should be done through NATO.<sup>637</sup> Interestingly, the Turks preferred to deal with the Americans rather than the alliance. The Turkish Air Force came to an agreement with JAMMATT (and not with NATO) on a plan to enhance the Turkish radar equipment and capabilities.<sup>638</sup>

In any case, both the State and the Defense Department officials agreed that hostile overflights should not be interpreted as an act of aggression (as was the Turkish point of view) but should be considered simply as a violation of air space.<sup>639</sup> For its part, the NAC seemed unable to conclude whether such actions constituted a violation of air space or an aggression. Even the NATO senior military authorities appeared divided: General Gruenther considered such over-flights as a direct attack against Turkey which should be dealt with by the Turkish Air Force; General Norstad however, who was about to succeed Gruenther, held a different view. Turkey should refrain from acting unilaterally and create a difficult situation for NATO.<sup>640</sup>

NATO's refusal to interpret over-flights of Turkish territory as a reason for the invocation of Article 5 of NATO greatly annoyed the Turks. The latter sought informally to secure a direct US commitment to help Turkey address the problem of

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<sup>637</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, pp.693-4; NARA/RG218/E.UD50, Box 17, Memorandum for the Chairman JCS on Turkish Radar Situation, 13-November-1956.

<sup>638</sup> *Ibid.*, p.699.

<sup>639</sup> *Ibid.*, p.694

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*, p.701.

inadequate detection and interception capability. Indeed, it was a customary practice of the Menderes government to deal with the Americans bilaterally on any questions where NATO (and other multilateral organizations) was involved. US officials believed that the Turkish needs for air support or for the improvement of their radar equipment and anti-aircraft defence should be given high priority. It was nevertheless also stressed that this policy had certain flaws, since 'to resort to bilateral arrangements of this sort out of the context of NATO would invite other NATO countries to request similar bilateral arrangements'.<sup>641</sup>

In the aftermath of the Suez Crisis, Turkey was alarmed by the (temporary) drift between the United States and Britain, the evident inability of the latter to act unilaterally in the region, the dire prospects for the Baghdad Pact's cohesion and strength and the increasing Soviet influence in Egypt and Syria. The details of the Syrian crisis which unfolded from August until October 1957 fall outside the purview of this thesis. However, it is important to note that the Turkish leadership decided to harden its policy towards the anti-Western Syrian regime and exert pressure, when by August 1957 several indications suggested that Syria might soon turn into a Soviet satellite. In September 1957 three Turkish divisions (including an armoured one) were deployed along the Turkish-Syrian border – an additional armoured brigade was reported to be deployed in early October. However, in the aftermath of Sputnik's launch on 4 October, Turkish 'militancy', though understandable by the Americans, could lead to an extremely serious situation. Washington believed that no unilateral

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<sup>641</sup> Ibid, p.703.



action should be taken by Turkey, particularly so long as no Syrian aggression was evident. In order to calm the Turks, further financial aid could be given.<sup>642</sup>

During the crisis the Turkish military sought to obtain SACEUR's support in case that Syrian, Egyptian or Soviet aircraft bombed targets in Turkey after a Turkish invasion into Syria. General Tunaboylu, Chief of the Turkish General Staff, stated that he would not permit his forces to enter Syria without a guarantee from USAF of defence against planes invading Turkey; he considered such a guarantee to be in line with NATO commitments. General Norstad however was deeply concerned about Turkish initiatives. Although he recognised that the redeployment of Turkish troops was a national and not NATO issue, he advised caution. Every effort should be made that Turkish activities were not interpreted as provocative. He also pointed out that there were no US interceptors stationed in Turkey.<sup>643</sup> The JCS concurred with Norstad. General Nathan Twining, now Chairman of the JCS, provided a rather limited support to Turkey in case of retaliation: 'if USAF planes were in Turkey at bases attacked by Syrian, Soviet or Egyptian planes, those USAF planes would be expected to defend against such an attack'.<sup>644</sup>

Meanwhile, after mid-September the crisis escalated. On 21 September a Soviet naval squadron visited Latakia in Syria, while in mid-October Egyptian troops were sent to the city to enhance Syrian defence and Nasser's prestige in the region. On 5 October Sixth Fleet vessels arrived in Izmir, and eleven days later Dulles stated that if the USSR attacked Turkey, the Americans would not confine themselves to a

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<sup>642</sup> Ayşegül Sever, 'The Compliant Ally? Turkey and the West in the Middle East 1954-58', *Middle Eastern Studies* 34/2 (April 1998), pp.73-90; Philip Anderson, '“Summer Madness”: The Crisis in Syria, August-October 1957', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 22/1/2 (1995), pp.21-42.

<sup>643</sup> DDEL/Norstad Papers/Country series, Box 50, Norstad to Twining, 16-September-1957.

<sup>644</sup> DDEL/Norstad Papers/Country series, Box 50, Twining to Norstad, 16-September-1957.

‘purely defensive operation’.<sup>645</sup> As the crisis continued, Norstad became quite critical both of Turkey’s military redeployment in the south-east of the country and of US decision to mobilise the Sixth Fleet; those movements had created a bad impression to some NATO allies. Furthermore, the SACEUR said that it was ‘ridiculous’ to think of Syria attacking Turkey. Dulles actually rebuffed Norstad, claiming that the latter referred to matters ‘related primarily not to NATO but to Middle East problems as to which probably and naturally he was not fully informed’. Obviously, Norstad’s top priority was to preserve NATO’s cohesion, and Dulles’ main preoccupation to retain US credibility to Turkey. Still, the Secretary of State (and the US policy makers in general) adopted an ambivalent position as the situation deteriorated during October. Although he admitted that Syria did not intend to attack Turkey, he viewed that the situation was not simple, because the Syrian crisis caused significant unrest in the region. In any event, the deployment of Turkish forces along the Turkish-Syrian borders could ‘cool off Syrian hotheads’. In addition, Dulles justified Turkish opposition to the establishment of a pro-Soviet regime on Turkey’s southern borders. Finally, Dulles concluded that the European allies did not want any significant US intervention in the Middle and Far East to avoid troubles in Europe; but he characterised such attitude as a ‘selfish’ one.<sup>646</sup>

Dulles also estimated that the Turkish military leadership’s main goal was to take advantage of the situation to secure more US aid. Eisenhower himself believed that US support of Turkey could not be easily rationalised in the absence of any real

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<sup>645</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, p.734.

<sup>646</sup> DDEL/Dulles Papers/General Correspondence/Memoranda, Box 1, Memorandum of Conversation with Norstad, 28-October-1957.

Syrian provocation.<sup>647</sup> At any rate, although the Turks could easily beat the Syrians, the consequences of a unilateral Turkish action would probably have very serious repercussions in the Middle East – ‘a subsequent period of unending turmoil’ would probably follow, Dulles remarked.<sup>648</sup> A few days later he concluded that the Soviets wished to avoid a confrontation with the West in the Middle East, so it might be tempting to force upon them ‘a serious loss of prestige’. But in such a case, Dulles continued, the Soviets would probably seek to regain their prestige later on another occasion, either in the same region or elsewhere, in areas where they enjoyed local superiority vis-à-vis the West (and we should always bear in mind that such areas included Thrace and West Berlin). Therefore, it would be inadvisable to initiate a dangerous ‘cycle of challenge and response’ which might lead to general war. Last but not least, in the event of a Turkish-Syrian conflict initiated by Ankara, all Arab countries would be compelled to support Syria and offer to the Soviets further opportunities to increase their influence in the region. Both Prime Minister Macmillan and Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd agreed with Dulles.<sup>649</sup>

For their part, the Soviets openly chastised Turkey (and the Americans) for having aggressive intentions against Syria. Moscow and Damascus decided to take the issue of the Turkish-Syrian crisis to the UN. However, culmination into conflict was avoided and the crisis itself was unexpectedly ended by Khrushchev himself on 29 October when he launched a ‘peace offensive’ on Turkey and publicly declared that ‘there was no threat in the Middle East’ and that the whole issue had been

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<sup>647</sup> DDEL/Dulles Papers/White House Memoranda, Box 5, Memorandum of Conversation with President, 1-October-1957.

<sup>648</sup> DDEL/Dulles Papers/General Correspondence/Memoranda, Box 1, Memorandum of Conversation with Senator Mansfield, 6-October-1957.

<sup>649</sup> DDEL/Dulles Papers/White House Memoranda, Box 5, Memorandum of Conversation at the White House, 25-October-1957.

‘misunderstood’.<sup>650</sup> After that, the UN General Assembly agreed to take no further action, and Turkey and Syria concurred. In assessing the Turkish attitude, it can be argued that although Ankara was certainly concerned over the rise of anti-Western sentiments and of Soviet influence in the Middle East, the Menderes government sought to achieve other goals through the outbreak of a small-scale crisis. The crisis bolstered the Democrat Party’s position in the interior for the forthcoming elections, since it distracted the public opinion’s attention from the critical economic situation. In addition the Turks probably favoured an increase of the tension in the region to enhance Turkey’s bargaining power with the United States. Last but not least, if Turkey had more leverage in Middle East affairs it might convince the Americans to grant further military and financial aid to Turkey and could establish a closer, more direct US-Turkish relationship.<sup>651</sup>

Both the civil and military authorities of NATO dealt with the situation in Syria in particular, and the Middle East in general, and the alliance tried to devise a coherent strategy. We already saw Norstad’s attitude and views during the crisis. Spaak judged that the Soviets would push their policy in Syria or anywhere else in the region to the extent of provoking a war.<sup>652</sup> The problem of Soviet political infiltration in Syria was also examined and assessed by the Permanent Representatives of the member-states. They expressed almost identical views, and agreed that the Syrian leadership had adopted a pro-Soviet rather than pro-communist position – Syria had become ‘the pawn of Soviet foreign policy in the Middle East’.<sup>653</sup> Soviet activities did not seem to constitute a very serious problem for the time being, although the

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<sup>650</sup> Sever, ‘The Compliant’, pp.73-90.

<sup>651</sup> For the Turkish aims, see for example *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, p.733; also Sever, ‘The Compliant’, pp.73-90, and Aydin, ‘Determinants’, pp.103-39.

<sup>652</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, p.736.

<sup>653</sup> NATO/PO/57/1162, Spaak’s Note on Syria and the Middle East, 26-September-1957.

possibility of an inadvertent conflict could not be excluded. In the long run the danger of Soviet penetration might become significant, and NATO should therefore devise a policy to prevent the extension of Soviet influence to other countries of the region. NATO countermeasures could include the build-up of the military establishments of the pro-Western governments of the area and the provision of economic aid for the Middle East countries (perhaps including Syria as well). Such aid had been already granted by the United States and Britain within the framework of the Eisenhower Doctrine and the Baghdad Pact, but the question remained if other NATO members were ready to participate in those efforts.<sup>654</sup>

The discussion in the NAC demonstrated that although a general consensus of views existed on the interpretation of recent developments in Syria, no agreement was reached on specific collective action. Soon the Permanent Representatives agreed on a very vague course of action: the NATO countries should not only seek to counteract Soviet moves and advances, but also aim at pacification and stability. As regards the military feature of NATO's reaction, any extension of Soviet military influence and presence in the Middle East – particularly the establishment of bases and Turkey's encirclement – should be opposed and Soviet threats and accusations against Turkey should not be left without reply by the allies. The establishment of a military liaison between NATO and the Baghdad Pact was also considered as an additional step.<sup>655</sup> However, this proposal did not generate much support. In November 1957, the Standing Group remarked that Soviet-bloc penetration of Syrian and Egyptian land forces was 'well-nigh complete', since they had been extensively re-equipped with Soviet type arms and material. Moreover, Soviet influence was

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<sup>654</sup> Ibid.

<sup>655</sup> NATO/PO/57/1276, Spaak's Summary on Syria and the Middle East, 15-October-1957.

extended by the presence of military technicians and advisors in Syria and Egypt and by the training of Syrian and Egyptian personnel in Soviet bloc countries. Soviet penetration of the Syrian and Egyptian air forces was considerable, while some influence in their navies was also apparent.<sup>656</sup>

But all those findings and notes did not mean much, so long as NATO failed to form a coherent strategy and undertake specific actions. Therefore, Turkish fears, however exaggerated, could not be allayed. Apparently, within NATO only the United States, Britain and Turkey were concerned significantly over the rise of neutralist feelings and probable Soviet influence in the Middle East. The other allies, particularly the smaller European countries, did not attribute much account to such developments and certainly the Middle East situation did not constitute a priority for them. Notably, Italy and, quite naturally, Greece did not endorse Turkish militancy. The Italians disagreed with Turkey's determination to deal with the threat by military means. Generally, Rome did not consider the application of force in the Middle East as the proper response to rising challenges; it believed that a multilateral plan of economic aid would be more appropriate and beneficial, and would widen the scope of NATO into the economic field – the latter was Rome's set goal from the mid-1950s.<sup>657</sup> During the crisis the Greek press suggested that the country should not help Turkey in case of war. Of course, it was quite unwise to express such views publicly; Greece would not gain if allied solidarity and cohesion were diminished.<sup>658</sup> So, in the aftermath of the Syrian crisis the Turkish leadership made plain to the Americans that 'Turkey had no illusion about NATO's abilities to be helpful in the Middle East'.

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<sup>656</sup> NATO/S.G.255/1(Revised/Final Decision), The Threat to NATO's Southern Flank Arising from Soviet Military Penetration of the Middle East, 7-November-1957.

<sup>657</sup> Brogi, 'Ike and Italy', pp.5-35.

<sup>658</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.82.

NATO was divided; and according to Ankara, US policy should nevertheless continue to be strong in the area. Menderes was gratified by the way the United States had stood by his country during the recent crisis.<sup>659</sup> Indeed, during the subsequent period the Turkish political and military leadership persistently sought to convince the Americans over the necessity for US-Turkish bilateral planning ('outside of NATO') and action in Syria and the Middle East, to foil Soviet and Nasser's plans.<sup>660</sup> For many Turkish officials, in matters affecting Turkey's security interests, the existing reality was a US-Turkish bilateral alliance, rather than NATO. Overall, the deteriorating situation in the Middle East and the rise of Soviet influence in Egypt and especially Syria started to pose additional security challenges to the waning Southern Flank, and particularly to Turkey.

### ***Conclusion***

From autumn 1956, NATO's Southern Flank was troubled by parallel developments and a combination of factors, some of which were born of UK-Greek rivalry and Greek-Turkish antagonism, others which grew from problems with strategy and finance, and yet others which related to tensions in the Middle East. Historians have dealt with some of these events (for example, the Cyprus problem and the Middle East crises of 1956-7) and to some extent, with the Italian and Greek military situation (but not the Turkish one). However, most studies do not provide a NATO (and especially a Southern Flank) perspective, while a comprehensive account

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<sup>659</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-57, XXIV, p.748.

<sup>660</sup> DDEL/Norstad Papers/Country files, Box 50, Message for Defense Secretary McElroy and General Twining from General Norstad, 25-November-1958.

on the effect that those challenges had on NATO's Southern Flank has been absent. Furthermore, some aspects have not yet been studied at all, as, for example, NATO assessments on the threat posed by the rising Soviet military penetration of the Middle East. The connection between the Southern Flank defence and economic reality has also received inadequate attention.

As this chapter has shown, Greek-Turkish antagonism over Cyprus (but also on topics like the Balkan Pact and the situation in the Middle East) was soon conveyed to the NATO bodies. Despite this, essentially none of the three countries directly concerned actually wished for full NATO intervention and arbitration. Indeed, the Greeks were aware that they could find little, if any, support from their NATO allies, since most of them were unwilling to become entangled in an escalating conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean; in addition, Greece was the weakest party and soon understood that it had fewer cards to play in comparison with Turkey and Britain. Moreover, Greece favoured a settlement reached between the Cypriot people and the British; in any such agreement the reality of Greek Cypriot predominance in the island would inevitably decide the outcome on – more or less – favourable terms. As regards Turkey, it never took the initiative in provoking discussion in the NAC, although regularly it responded to Greek arguments. The Turks did not favour NATO intervention because they understood that western and world public opinion was generally sympathetic to the Greek Cypriot cause (even when NATO members voted against it at the UN), while Washington was unwilling to support partition. Therefore, Ankara preferred to seek a favourable solution through a tripartite UK-Greece-Turkish international agreement; close cooperation with the British would ensure Greek isolation and the conclusion of an agreement leading probably to future or



immediate partition. Therefore, the Turks envisaged a possible role for NATO as a stabilising factor only after a basis of agreement had been reached between the three interested countries.

Britain did not wish to discuss the Cyprus problem in NATO forums, at least initially. By early 1957 it appeared to prefer some discussion 'in the restricted forum of NATO than in the public stage of the United Nations' as part of a process which would end in isolating the Greeks. In any case, the British repeatedly emphasised their unwillingness to accept any NATO arbitration in the Cyprus dispute. They insisted that some of British requirements in the island derived from purely UK interests in the Middle East (particularly the Baghdad Pact) which were not of direct NATO concern. Only if and when a basis for a settlement was agreed between the three interested countries, could NATO play a useful role as arbitrator. As already mentioned, the other NATO members generally avoided to raise the Cyprus problem, although there had been a growing conviction, shared mainly by West Germany and Italy, but also by Norway and Belgium, that the dispute could not be kept out of NATO indefinitely. It is interesting that France, a colonial power itself involved in the Suez Crisis and preoccupied with the Algerian War, remained silent. As for the US position, until late 1956 the United States pressed the British, the Greeks and the Turks to moderate their aims, and was anxious not to bring the Cyprus dispute into NATO forums. By early 1957, Washington endorsed UK-Greek-Turkish talks inside NATO (in conjunction with the resumption of British and Cypriot talks in the island) and backed in principle the Ismay and Spaak initiatives. During this period all NATO members (including Britain, Greece, Turkey, the United States and the other allies) appeared reluctant to discuss the Cyprus dispute in NATO, sharing an equal desire not to add difficulties

and further complicate the issue. No one wished to project into the alliance the severe strains existing in the relations between the parties concerned, and NATO itself did not want to press for a solution which might lead to a probable Greek, or, significantly less likely, Turkish defection.<sup>661</sup>

The Suez Crisis proved a watershed because it delivered a fatal blow to British prestige and Britain's position in the Middle East, initiated a period of increasing political and military Soviet infiltration in the area and caused the rise of anti-western sentiments in many Arab countries. Although the United States fully replaced Britain as the dominant western power in the Middle East, the Soviets began to penetrate the area posing a new threat to the Southern Flank of NATO from the South-east. Soviet political, military, and, later on, naval presence increased in subsequent years and US and NATO planning was preoccupied with this new threat at least until the mid-1970s. The issue was thoroughly discussed in NATO forums, particularly during and after the outbreak of the Syrian crisis, but once again the alliance failed to decide on a specific strategy and way of response. The United States, Britain and Turkey were much more concerned over negative developments in the Middle East than the majority of the member-states. At the very peak of the Syrian Crisis, even the American officials tried to keep a balance between retaining NATO cohesion and affirming US credibility (particularly to Turkey). Surely, NATO was persistently facing serious difficulties to agree and act on challenges not pertaining to its core (that is, Western Europe and Northern Atlantic). Not until well after the end of the Cold War period, and under completely different circumstances, was NATO

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<sup>661</sup> For some material on the discussion of the Cyprus problem at NATO and the attitude of the parties concerned until August 1957, see TNA/FO/371/130139/RGC/1072/65, Galsworthy Minute on Previous History of Cyprus Question in NATO, 16-August-1957.

able to decide and implement policies to deal with 'out-of-area' challenges and even undertake military operations.

As regards the military aspect of the situation in the Southern Flank, two distinct cases existed: on the one hand, Italy appeared reluctant to assume a burden-sharing commensurate to its economic and industrial might and potential. The Italian defence effort was modest. Rome's immediate fears of external threat had been soothed significantly by the normalisation of Italian-Yugoslav relations, the relaxation of East-West tension in Europe and the presence of US troops in northern Italy; moreover, Italy did not border with the Soviet bloc. For all these reasons, the Italian leadership put more emphasis on the transformation of NATO from a purely military alliance to an organisation dealing also with political and economic problems by promoting cooperation in these fields.

On the other hand, although Greece and Turkey favoured closer intra-NATO political and economic cooperation (primarily as a means to receive additional military and economic aid), they continued to put emphasis on the military aspect of the alliance as well. Both countries were frontline states bordering with the Soviet bloc or the USSR itself, and felt obliged to raise powerful defence establishments and maintain their armed forces in the maximum state of readiness. Nevertheless, the Greek and Turkish security problems could not be solved by military means alone. Despite their huge defence effort and the substantial US military and economic aid, Greece and Turkey did not have the potential to raise, modernise and maintain their armed forces to such extent as to achieve the force goals envisaged by themselves and NATO. In the absence of a sound economic and industrial basis, both countries lacked the necessary resources to sustain effectively their defence establishments. The

Americans were the first to understand this reality and toyed with the idea of force reductions in the Greek and Turkish armed services (particularly in their land forces); however, for the time being they hesitated to officially ask for, and implement, cuts on the Greek and Turkish force levels and on US aid, because at the same time Washington was using its aid as a 'carrot' to mitigate Greek and Turkish complaints about insufficient American support in Cyprus and, in the Turkish case, the Middle East.

## **6. FROM THE BRINK OF DISSOLUTION TO REVIVAL, AUTUMN**

**1957-1959.**

From October 1957 to December 1958 NATO faced a series of unprecedented crises. The launch of the Soviet satellite, Sputnik, and the Berlin crisis both brought great tension on a global level. On a regional level, further deterioration in the Middle East (culminating in the June 1958 Lebanon crisis and the concurrent coup d'état in Iraq) added pressures, but the greatest for NATO's Southern Flank was that created by the escalation of the Cyprus dispute and ever worsening Greek-Turkish relations. By autumn 1958, Greek-NATO relations were at their lowest ebb, and a possible Greek withdrawal from NATO, and even the fall of the country in political turmoil, could not be excluded. In addition, by mid-1958 Turkey's economic and financial situation had deteriorated seriously, and it escaped bankruptcy (and probable political instability) only after the intervention of an international consortium. In exchange for this bail-out, the Menderes government had to give up its rigorous development programme and instead adopt a draconian stabilisation programme. Turkey also lost its last regional ally, Iraq, since by late 1958 the new Iraqi leadership adopted a non-aligned stance and seemed to lean towards the USSR. By March 1959, after Iraqi withdrawal, the Baghdad Pact was virtually neutralised, and despite being renaming as CENTO (Central Treaty Organisation), it never recovered a sense of effectiveness.

Once again, NATO proved more able to adjust its strategy and deal with the general Cold War challenges (as was the enhancement of the Soviet strategic nuclear capability) than to meet successfully a serious intra-allied dispute, such as the Cyprus

problem, or ‘out-of-area’ crises affecting its security, such as continuing turmoil in the Middle East. Until now, NATO historiography has not dealt with this interesting aspect. At any rate, in early 1958 the Alliance modified its strategy, adopting the M.C.70 document.<sup>662</sup> This was supposed to give emphasis on conventional forces, because limited war or threats were regarded as more likely than a general war. However, in essence the new strategy provided for the nuclearization of NATO assigned ground and air forces (that is, NATO ‘Shield’ forces, not merely the retaliatory ones) which would be equipped with tactical nuclear weapons.<sup>663</sup> Therefore, it threatened to erode further NATO’s conventional capabilities, since defence budgets would give priority to the procurement of nuclear delivery vehicles and the conversion of existing conventional weapons systems, like aircraft, into dual-capable platforms.<sup>664</sup> Although the Southern Flank countries, and especially Greece and Turkey, would not pay themselves for the new equipment, the M.C.70 requirements posed several challenges: as regards the Southern Flank region, M.C.70 called for a quantitative reduction of ground forces, but an increase of the units placed under NATO command. However, Italy, and Greece and Turkey in particular, wished to retain additional units under national command. Moreover, this strategy, placing emphasis on new (or ‘advanced’) weapons, modernization of equipment, and a higher states of readiness, entailed a considerable increase of defence expenditure, without commensurate increase of US economic and military aid.

Despite those difficulties, the Italian, Greek and Turkish forces continued to increase gradually their combat potential, although essentially no significant improvement of their defence posture occurred. However, this time NATO’s primary

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<sup>662</sup> NATO/M.C.70, A Report on the Minimum Essential Force Requirements, 29-January-1958.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid; NATO/C-VR(58)21, Verbatim Record of the NAC Ministerial Meeting, 15-April-1958.

<sup>664</sup> Duffield, *Power Rules*, p.144.

failure appeared to be its inability to intervene actively in order to stabilise politically the explosive situation in the Eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, in mid-June the NAC was preoccupied for the first time to such an extent with the Cyprus issue. The situation had become critical because extensive violence flared throughout Cyprus, Greece once more decided to withdraw from HALFSEE in Izmir, and the British undertook their last initiative for a settlement of the Cyprus problem which met their own as well Turkish needs, but totally ignored Greek and Greek Cypriot ones. At the same time, the Americans remained passive and unable or unwilling to intervene, and the other NATO members were unwilling to be entangled in this mess. Only the Secretary General, Paul-Henri Spaak, tried to mediate, but his initiative collapsed in late October 1958.

But then, when everyone feared the worst (for instance, a possible Greek drift out of NATO with unforeseeable repercussions), Greece and Turkey managed all of a sudden to reach a compromise solution in early 1959, and Britain had no option but to follow suit. In essence, although NATO itself had been unable to mediate successfully between the three parties directly concerned, it still constituted the major, if not the only, link between Greece and Turkey and the West. And if it was obvious that Greece would not leave NATO unless a total defeat over Cyprus might render Greek withdrawal inevitable, Turkey was becoming increasingly worried about its regional isolation, at a time of rising East-West tension. While Greece had formed a strong bilateral partnership with Yugoslavia and had established good relations with the Arab world, Ankara would be cut off geographically from NATO and the West, in case Greece left the alliance. This would be an unacceptable strategic setback, and therefore in late 1958-early 1959 the Turkish leadership proved ready to accept a

solution which would not entail partition, as Greece and Makarios had been already ready to accept a solution which would not lead to *enosis*. Therefore, it could be claimed that indirectly NATO ultimately served as a stabilising factor in the Eastern Mediterranean.

***i) Regional pressures and NATO's response: Cyprus, the Middle East, and the Balkans.***

NATO faced a combination of regional pressures from late 1957 to late 1958 all of which affected the Southern Flank. The first was the ongoing and painful dispute over Cyprus. Here, a standoff continued between the Greeks on the one side, and the British and the Turks, on the other, which troubled not only relations between these three protagonists but also the solidity of the Southern Flank. To break the stalemate, the British devised the 'Foot Plan' in December 1957/January 1958. This proposal suggested a seven year period of self government and left the door open for partition in the future (since in case of the application of self-determination, this would be granted separately to the two communities). In any case, no solution would be implemented without the approval of both communities. Thus it still gave a veto to the Turkish Cypriots.<sup>665</sup> Although their new initiative did not provide any political role for NATO, the British wanted to keep Spaak fully informed of any developments on the Cyprus problem. So they briefed Spaak on the content of the Foot Plan on 9 January. The Secretary General was not enthusiastic about it, but agreed that he

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<sup>665</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Britain*, pp.123-8; Holland, 'NATO', pp.33-61.



should not intervene for the time being. This would probably occur 'if and when' the Greeks were approached, since Spaak had considerable influence and prestige over Athens (but almost none over Ankara, because he opposed partition).<sup>666</sup>

London chose to inform first the Turks on its new initiative for a Cyprus settlement, but failed to generate Turkey's support. Despite the prompt offer of a base on the island to the Turkish Armed Forces in exchange for the dropping of the Turkish aim of partition, at that stage the Turks were demanding partition and remained negative towards any settlement that deferred it for the future. They also demanded that the base in Cyprus be given to them immediately. After the Turkish rejection of the Foot Plan, the British found themselves in a complete deadlock. Violence escalated significantly in Cyprus, since the Turks established a powerful Turkish-Cypriot paramilitary organisation at the island, the TMT (directly controlled by the Turkish General Staff), which now attacked the British security forces trying to bring about partition immediately. However, the British could not displease the Turkish Cypriots on whose participation in the Auxiliary Police the British drive against EOKA depended. Thus, this episode revealed the extent to which the British security drive in Cyprus had become depended on the Turkish Cypriots. Then, the British suggested another solution: Cyprus would be united with Greece, but Turkey would also receive a military base in the island. Although the Greek government seemed willing to discuss the idea, it soon fell over domestic matters and elections were proclaimed for May; at any rate, the Turks again refused to drop partition.<sup>667</sup>

Spaak, annoyed at Turkish intransigence, commented that 'the time was surely past in the West when populations could be uprooted and the economy of a

<sup>666</sup> TNA/FO/371/136388/RGC1072/1, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.11, 10-January-1958.

<sup>667</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Britain*, pp.125-31. Holland, *Britain and the Revolt*, pp.228-235.

country upset' due to partition. Spaak considered that it might be wise to revive the idea of calling a conference at which attendance would not be restricted to the three countries directly concerned: first, the Turks would probably find it more difficult to justify their arguments at such a gathering (to which Spaak, and probably the United States and other NATO members could participate) than in the course of the current exchanges; second, as Dulles acknowledged, the Greeks might attend a conference, in which Spaak would be also present.<sup>668</sup> The latter had taken into account the Greek views and favoured a truly compromise solution.

However, in spring 1958 the British devised a new initiative which was formalised as the 'Macmillan Plan' in June. It was based on the establishment of a tridominium in Cyprus and implicitly included the prospect of future partition. Consequently, it was more attractive to Turkey and offered some chance of movement on the dispute, even at Greek cost. London sought a way out of the impasse without displeasing Turkey due to the latter's position in the Middle East.<sup>669</sup> The British policy makers thought that NATO could eventually play some role. Indeed, no discussion had taken place on the Cyprus problem since the May 1957 NAC meeting, while the subsequent Spaak initiative had made no progress, as analysed in the previous chapter. As the British were ready to announce their new initiative, it seemed appropriate to give NATO members advance warning and thus demonstrate 'an example of [British] respect for the principle of political consultation in NATO on matters concerning the whole alliance'. At any rate, it was doubtful whether the ensuing discussion would be of any use; a 'slanging match' between the Greek and

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<sup>668</sup> TNA/FO371/136388/RGC1072/3, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.33, 17-January-1958, and RGC1072/4, Washington to FO, No.245, 5-February-1958.

<sup>669</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Britain*, pp.134-7.

Turkish representatives was expected, while their colleagues would most likely remain silent or 'confine themselves to cautious platitudes'.<sup>670</sup>

Meanwhile, after 8 June the Turkish Cypriots, at the instructions of Ankara, attacked the Greek Cypriots trying to bring partition closer. By that date, as the US Consul in Nicosia reported, conditions were approaching 'the Palestinian one'. Initially the EOKA's leader Georgios Grivas was restrained, but in early July he responded and communal violence spread throughout the island. This lasted for almost two months and caused an almost complete collapse of the security situation in Cyprus.<sup>671</sup> At the same time, on 9 June the British informed Spaak on the Macmillan Plan. The Secretary General reacted favourably and promised to call a special session of the NAC on 16 June. It was imperative to bring the present unrest in Cyprus to an end because the local situation and the resulting Greek-Turkish strains had become extremely grave.<sup>672</sup> Meanwhile, the Greek permanent delegation in NATO also requested a special assembly of the NAC to denounce Turkish Cypriot violence in Cyprus.<sup>673</sup>

The NAC was convened on 10 June and, for the first time, was almost entirely devoted to Cyprus. The discussion consisted mainly of 'an outspoken exchange' between the Greek and Turkish Permanent Representatives, Michael Melas and Selim Sarper. The former condemned Turkish intransigence and compared the recent Turkish Cypriot violence in Cyprus with the 1955 Istanbul riots and warned that if this Turkish attitude continued, Greece might 'be obliged to reconsider the nature of her ties within the alliance'. On Turkish part, Sarper's speech was, as the

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<sup>670</sup> TNA/FO/371/136388/RGC1072/10, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.23, 17-May-1958.

<sup>671</sup> Holland, *Britain and the Revolt*, pp.251-4.

<sup>672</sup> TNA/FO/371/136388/RGC1072/16, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.65, 9-June-1958.

<sup>673</sup> TNA/FO/371/136388/RGC1072/15, Athens to FO, No.374, 10-June-1958.

British noted, ‘quite unnecessarily violent and tactless’ and ‘occasionally downright offensive’, causing irritation to the Council. He claimed that partition should be considered as a compromise and as ‘a final [Turkish] sacrifice in the interests of the alliance’, since the proper solution would be the ‘return of Cyprus to Turkey’. Interestingly, neither Melas nor Sarper attacked or even criticised the British, and, for the first time, permanent representatives of third countries intervened actively (especially the Canadian and the Belgian, but also the West German, the French, Italian and US ones).<sup>674</sup> Thus the ground was fertile for the British proposal. NATO allies received it very favourably – the American, French, and German governments expressed their desire to help – and all pleaded with Greece and Turkey to give it serious and sympathetic consideration.<sup>675</sup>

Discussions continued in NAC during the following days, but nothing important or encouraging came out. The Turks insisted on a tripartite conference to reach a final settlement of the Cyprus problem on the basis of partition. Apparently, they expected that Greece would refuse to attend, and therefore the road would open for a UK-Turkish agreement on partition. However, very soon the Turkish leadership started to see the merits of the Macmillan Plan, and specifically that in essence, it provided for the introduction of functional separation, or ‘administrative partition’.<sup>676</sup> It should be stressed that British policy makers were fully aware that the unilateral implementation of the Macmillan Plan might cause serious adverse effects on Greece’s international position and orientation. As an FO minute acknowledged on 24 June, a Greek withdrawal from NATO could not be ruled out; ‘even if this is the case,

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<sup>674</sup> TNA/FO/371/136388/RGC1072/14, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.70, 10-June-1958, and RGC1072/18, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.65 Saving, 10-June-1958.

<sup>675</sup> TNA/FO/371/136389/RGC1072/19, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.73, 13-June-1958.

<sup>676</sup> TNA/FO/371/136390/RGC1072/27, Ankara to FO, No.943, 18-June-1958.

however, it is easier to contemplate with equanimity a neutralist Greece than a neutralist Turkey, since the latter is in a key position as the hinge of the Atlantic and Baghdad Treaties. However remote the contingency of a neutralist Turkey, it is an unacceptable risk. A neutralist Greece, on the other hand, could perhaps even be exploited advantageously and assimilated with Yugoslavia as part of a Balkan no-man's land'.<sup>677</sup>

Once again, NATO's political cohesion and the Southern Flank's military effectiveness were jeopardised due to the escalation of the Cyprus crisis and the consequent exacerbation of Greek-Turkish tension. The Greek Government, fearing that the Turkish authorities would not hesitate to precipitate events similar to the ones occurred in September 1955, decided on 14 June to withdraw all Greek officers serving in HALFSEE in Izmir, along with their wives and families and any civilian employees (approximately 200 people in total).<sup>678</sup> Greece also warned that NATO was in danger due to continuing British intransigence and Turkish provocation. In making these moves, Athens sought to press its allies, particularly the Americans, to intervene. In any case, Zorlu reacted angrily and accused Greece, and personally Averoff, of turning a tripartite UK-Greek-Turkish issue into a NATO problem. Greek actions could only harm the alliance's solidarity, while Turkey would not be influenced by such manoeuvres. Zorlu also noted that, for the time being, Turkey had no reason 'to hold NATO responsible in the Cyprus question' and that so far it had 'never defaulted from her obligations within NATO'.<sup>679</sup>

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<sup>677</sup> Quoted in Hatzivassiliou, *Britain*, pp.137-8.

<sup>678</sup> TNA/FO/371/136236/RG1071/1, Ankara to FO, No.900, 14-June-1958.

<sup>679</sup> TNA/FO/371/136236/RG1071/1, Ankara to FO, No.915, 16-June-1958.

This second Greek withdrawal from HALFSEE caught NATO officials off guard once again. NATO authorities had not been advised prior to the Greek move, since all arrangements were made directly between the Greek authorities and senior Greek officers at NATO.<sup>680</sup> As might be expected, Greece's unilateral initiative did not find any support from other NATO members. The situation worsened when the Greeks refused to participate in a NATO military meeting held in Athens upon the arrival of the Turkish officers. Norstad protested to General Konstantinos Dovas, Chief of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff, pointing out that such moves threatened seriously the efficiency of the whole allied command structure.<sup>681</sup> On 27 June Michael Melas apologised to Norstad for the procedure followed by Greece, though not for the actual gesture, and Norstad ordered the CINCSOUTH and the CINCAFMED not to get involved themselves with any discussions with the Greeks and leave the issue to him.<sup>682</sup> In any case, Greece insisted on the withdrawal, but informed Norstad that its armed forces would participate in the forthcoming NATO manoeuvres (provided that there would be no contact between Greek and Turkish officers) and would accept direction from HALFSEE. In addition, Melas made plain that Greek officers were prohibited from going to Turkey and requested that no Turkish officers would be ordered to Greece.<sup>683</sup>

In an effort to get Greece back into HALFSEE or at least avert more serious developments, Norstad visited Athens in late August and held talks with the Greek political and military leadership. The visit went well. He discussed Greece's defence effort and situation, Greek-Turkish relations and the problem of Greek withdrawal

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<sup>680</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Country File/box\_49, Bulletin on Greek withdrawal from HALFSEE, 14-June-1958.

<sup>681</sup> TNA/FO/371/136236/RG1071/2, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.110 Saving, 25-June-1958.

<sup>682</sup> TNA/FO/371/136236/RG1071/2, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.119, 29-June-1959.

<sup>683</sup> DDEL/Norstad\_Papers/Policy File/box\_88, Houghton (Paris) to State Department, 11-July-1958.

from HALFSEE. Norstad expressed his hope for an early return of the Greek officers in Izmir, but it seems that he did not press the Karamanlis government on this issue. He only proposed a way out through an interim solution, that is, the appointment of a Greek General in HALFSEE after obtaining personal assurances from Menderes for his treatment; but Karamanlis eventually deferred the whole issue for the time being.<sup>684</sup> As the situation deteriorated further in September, Norstad decided that it would be wiser to leave things as they were. Under existing circumstances, another Greek-Turkish (or even Greek-NATO) crisis could not be ruled out, and therefore a second consecutive Greek withdrawal from NATO's integrated command would cause more harm to the alliance than the temporary absence from HALFSEE.<sup>685</sup>

Meanwhile, the Cyprus imbroglio was reaching its peak. From mid-June 1958 US policy makers feared that if the Macmillan Plan was implemented, Greece might be driven out of NATO; contrary to FO assessments, they held that such development would deliver a severe blow to the alliance. Therefore, the Americans believed that the Macmillan Plan should merely serve as a starting point for talks leading to a compromise settlement probably on the basis of guaranteed independence (which would inevitably entail the end of British sovereignty). NATO could be used to drive Britain away from its current policy.<sup>686</sup> For their part, British officials were suspicious of US intentions and sought to avoid any actual NATO intervention over which they would not have full control: 'what we want at this stage from NATO, and

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<sup>684</sup> TNA/FO/371/136392/RGC1072/65, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, No.258 Saving, 5-September-1958; *KKA*, 3, p.220.

<sup>685</sup> TNA/FO/371/136392/RGC1072/65, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, 17-September-1958.

<sup>686</sup> Holland, 'NATO and the Struggle for Cyprus', pp.33-61.

in particular from Spaak personally, is a continuation of good offices, but not direct intervention in the form of mediation'.<sup>687</sup>

After a fruitless intervention from Spaak on 5 August which was closer to the Greek views, the British decided that they could not risk losing Turkish support and tried to regain the initiative. They put a slightly modified version of the Macmillan Plan to Athens and Ankara, only to have it rejected by Greece on 19 August. However, Turkey accepted it, while Washington also endorsed it. Moreover, a deadline was set: a Greek and a Turkish governmental representative to the Governor of Cyprus would be appointed on 1 October. By late August the Macmillan government decided that it would proceed with the implementation of the plan only with Turkish cooperation, if necessary.<sup>688</sup> Disaster was looming for the Greeks, who were now almost completely isolated. It was now, on 9 September, that the Karamanlis government made an almost direct threat of withdrawal from NATO.<sup>689</sup>

Those developments had created a potentially explosive atmosphere. Just few days before the expiration of the British deadline of 1 October, which would bring the Macmillan Plan into operation, Spaak undertook action. First, he visited Athens on 22 September to hold talks with the Greek leadership. At the same time, Makarios, in an effort to outflank the British, appeared to be ready for the first time to abandon the claim for the application of self-determination, accepting Cypriot independence 'guaranteed against *enosis* or partition'. Although the British remained suspicious and

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<sup>687</sup> TNA/FO371/136390/RGC1072/35, FO to UK Delegation to NATO, No.534, 24-June-1958.

<sup>688</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Britain*, pp.143-6.

<sup>689</sup> *KKA*, 3, pp.223-4.



the Turks negative to such a prospect, Spaak believed that Makarios' proposal was a significant development and that time was ripe for action.<sup>690</sup>

On 24-25 September Spaak reported on the results of his talks to the NAC and put forward his revised plan for NATO mediation. The Secretary General proposed an urgent conference under NATO auspices, involving Britain, Greece and Turkey as well as representatives of the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Under existing circumstances, only a provisional solution could be sought. Any such interim solution should not prejudice the definitive settlement and should 'mark an important step forward in respect of possibilities for self-government of the Cypriot community'; in addition it should also 'include all necessary guarantees for protection of the minority' and 'equally assure the bases and installations necessary for Great Britain to be able to fulfil its international obligations'. The plan provided for the setting-up of a Government Council with Greek-Cypriot majority responsible for regulating affairs and of two communal bodies with responsibility for all community matters. Finally, the Governor would be British, would retain responsibility for foreign affairs, defence, and internal security, and would preside at the Government Council.<sup>691</sup>

The NAC considered the Spaak proposals and got the opinions of the three countries directly concerned, which accepted in principle the idea of calling a conference. However, the British and the Turks did not wish to suspend the implementation of the Macmillan Plan, while the Greeks sought to place emphasis on the Spaak proposals hoping to achieve adjustments to the British initiative, and above all, to postpone the appointment of the Turkish representative in Cyprus which would

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<sup>690</sup> *The Times*, 23 & 24-September-1958.

<sup>691</sup> NATO/RDC/58/389, Note by the Executive Secretary on Cyprus, 31-October-1958.

inevitable create new conditions in the island.<sup>692</sup> Further discussions in NAC on 29 September proved inconclusive, while the following day Ankara announced the appointment of a Turkish special representative in Cyprus.<sup>693</sup>

On 30 September the British managed to persuade the Americans and Spaak to combine the implementation of the Macmillan Plan with a conference under NATO auspices to reach a final settlement.<sup>694</sup> Therefore, any final solution would be considered on the basis of the implementation of the Macmillan Plan, which was unacceptable to the Greek side. The latter had to reach a decision. Averoff leaned towards rejection of the Spaak initiative (arguing that the British would be able to steer the conference to the direction they desired), Greek diplomats were divided, while Makarios seemed willing to attend. Then Greece decided to go along with the NATO procedure and discussions for a conference resumed, but it was soon proven that the conference would only discuss and not decide the final settlement. Moreover, none of the small NATO countries wished to participate in the conference, since everyone wanted to avoid entanglement in the dispute. At this point, fearing the prospect of Greek isolation in the conference, Makarios decided not to attend. Then Athens felt that a conference without Cypriot participation was useless, and the Greek government finally rejected the idea of a conference on 25 October. This development, in conjunction with another public threat voiced by Averoff, some days earlier, that Greece might leave NATO, infuriated Spaak and the Americans.<sup>695</sup> However, even under those occasions, Greece continued to report to NATO on the

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<sup>692</sup> Ibid; also *The Times*, 29-September-1958.

<sup>693</sup> *The Times*, 30-September-1958.

<sup>694</sup> TNA/FO/371/136393/RGC/1072/81, UK Delegation NATO to FO, No.267, 30-September-1958.

<sup>695</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Britain and the International Status of Cyprus*, pp.149-50.

Greek-Yugoslav military contacts.<sup>696</sup> This was indicative of the Greeks' desire not to leave NATO, but also of the confusion of these days.

The eventual Greek rejection of Spaak's conference proposal isolated Greece and the Greek Cypriots. At the same time, the Turks had regained *de jure* presence on the island, and could negotiate directly with the Greeks from a position of relative strength; British support was no longer necessary.<sup>697</sup> Then, in early December Zorlu approached Averoff during discussion of the Cyprus issue in the UN General Assembly and hinted that a compromise settlement on the basis of guaranteed independence (excluding both union and partition) could be reached between Turkey and Greece.<sup>698</sup> The reason for that unexpected initiative was the increasing Turkish concern and apprehension about the deteriorating situation in the Middle East, and particularly the course of events in Iraq after the coup d'état of June 1958. Indeed, the new Iraqi regime soon distanced itself from the West, and Turkey not only lost its last regional ally in the Middle East, but was facing the prospect of an additional enemy at its eastern frontier. Therefore, Ankara could not push Greece to such an extent as to risk a possible Greek withdrawal from NATO, which would mean Turkey's complete isolation and encirclement. Averoff also thought that the revival of Greek-Turkish cooperation was a necessary precondition for both countries, and the West in general, to confront the dangers in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean; anyway a Greek-Turkish negotiation was Greece's last chance to stop the implementation of the Macmillan Plan. Therefore, a definite rather than interim solution should be reached on the Cyprus problem, to prevent the continuation or recurrence of Greek-Turkish antagonism in the future. Averoff and Zorlu held further talks in mid-December

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<sup>696</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Subject File, Box 95, Admiral Briscoe to Norstad, 10-October-1958.

<sup>697</sup> Holland, 'NATO', pp.33-61.

<sup>698</sup> KKA, 3, pp.295-6, 320.

during the NAC Ministerial Meeting. They still had considerable divergence of views, but both agreed that they could not proceed with bilateral negotiations for a solution on the basis of guaranteed independence, until they received British assurance that London would be ready to accept such a settlement.<sup>699</sup> During the NAC the two statesmen also saw Selwyn Lloyd. At that stage, London could do little to oppose a Greek-Turkish agreement. Negotiations continued and Averoff and Zorlu met again in mid-January 1959.

With Athens and Ankara still unable to agree, their relations – and the Southern Flank – hung by a thread. Admiral Charles Brown, who had just succeeded Admiral Briscoe as CINCSOUTH, visited Athens on 27-28 January 1959 and held talks with the Greek leadership. He emphasised that the continuing absence of Greek officers from HALFSEE was bringing about considerable attenuation to the south-eastern front of NATO. The Greek side insisted that the officers would return to Izmir only if the Cyprus problem was settled and the Greek-Turkish relations improved.<sup>700</sup> Finally, after intense but brief negotiations, a compromise settlement was reached by the Greek-Turkish and UK-Greek-Turkish accords in Zurich and London respectively in February 1959. Once Greece and Turkey had managed to reconcile their differences Britain could not oppose an agreement. These agreements provided for the establishment of a Cypriot state based on guaranteed independence and a quite complex political system.<sup>701</sup>

Neither NATO nor the United States participated in any way in the Zurich-London agreements, although both the Greeks and the Turks had agreed in principle

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<sup>699</sup> TNA/FO/371/136314/RGC10319/283, Athens to FO, No.905, 24-December-1958.

<sup>700</sup> KKA, 3, pp.377-8.

<sup>701</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Britain*, pp.157-8.

on the eligibility of the Cyprus republic to join NATO. The United States appeared extremely reluctant to commit itself on any guarantee or to endorse Cypriot membership of NATO.<sup>702</sup> In any case, the settlement of the Cyprus issue paved the way for the Greek-Turkish rapprochement and for the normalisation of relations between Greece and its NATO allies. Thus, on 21 February 1959 the Hellenic National Defence General Staff informed Norstad, through CINCSOUTH Brown, that the Greek military personnel of HALFSEE would return in Izmir to undertake their duty. The first echelon would arrive on 25 February.<sup>703</sup> Therefore, political stability and intra-allied military cooperation were restored in the Southern Flank area.

In another part of the region things were equally confusing. NATO did not manage to form (if it sought at all) a coherent strategy in the Middle East, and the United States eventually took the lead and unveiled a policy of its own.<sup>704</sup> As we have seen developments in the Middle East affected the Southern Flank, and especially Turkey. In 1958-59 NATO continued to assess the implications of Soviet military penetration of the Middle East and the possible threat posed to the Southern Flank. It was acknowledged that in this area it was difficult to separate the Soviet military and economic penetration from political penetration by means of subversion. At any rate, until the late 1950s only the United Arab Republic (UAR – comprised of Egypt and Syria) and Yemen had accepted large scale economic and military Soviet bloc aid (including armour, artillery, piston and jet aircraft, various vessels, plus small arms and ammunition). In addition, Soviet bloc military training and indoctrination in UAR's armed forces was extensive. For the time being, the Soviet military activities

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<sup>702</sup> Holland, 'NATO and the Struggle for Cyprus', pp.33-61.

<sup>703</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Country File, Box, 49, MOD Greece to SACEUR, 21-February-1959.

<sup>704</sup> Sten Rynning, 'NATO and the Broader Middle East, 1949-2007: The History and Lessons of Controversial Encounters', *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 30/6 (December 2007), pp.905-927.

in the UAR did not in themselves constitute a threat to NATO. The quantity and quality of the equipment delivered, and the overall situation of the Egyptian and Syrian armed forces, could not seriously threaten the Southern Flank. Nevertheless, it was assessed that a potential threat did exist, since the construction of installations (including airfields and port facilities) in the UAR could be utilised by Soviet forces in case of general war as advanced bases of operations. Furthermore, the increase of Soviet influence and presence in the Middle East could threaten NATO indirectly, by hampering easy access of the West to Middle Eastern oil.<sup>705</sup>

Things seemed to become worse by late 1958. Soon after the revolution in Iraq and the subsequent regime change, the new Iraqi leadership not only changed course, abandoned the country's pro-Western orientation and left the Baghdad Pact, but also began to receive Soviet military aid. Moreover, an important trade agreement was signed between the USSR and Iraq in October 1958, while a Soviet military mission arrived in the country in December. Meanwhile, large number of Egyptian, as well as some Syrian officers, had been already sent to various Soviet bloc countries for military training. Although Syrian forces could not be considered a serious threat to NATO's Southern Flank, the spread of Soviet influence to Iraq was a significant development, because it seriously weakened the defence position of Turkey.<sup>706</sup> Indeed, Ankara did not fail to notice this; soon, it felt so vulnerable at its eastern frontier, that it reappraised its Cyprus policy and sought a compromise accommodation to restore relations with Athens and revive the Greek-Turkish partnership.

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<sup>705</sup> NATO/S.G.255/2(Final Decision), The Threat to NATO's Southern Flank Arising from Soviet Military Penetration of the Middle East, 14-August-1958.

<sup>706</sup> NATO/S.G.255/3(Final Decision), The Threat to NATO's Southern Flank Arising from Soviet Military Penetration in the Middle East, 24-March-1959.

Despite these intelligence assessments and the military estimates on the probable Soviet threat on NATO's Southern Flank arising from USSR's penetration in the Middle East, the alliance avoided taking measures to deal with the Soviet challenge in the area. During 1958-9, NAC meetings did not consider the Middle East at any length and NATO authorities were never seriously preoccupied with the formulation of a coherent strategy for the region, as it was formally out of the NATO area. It was not the case that NATO had abandoned the Middle East as a potential theatre of conflict in the future. One of the few political reports on conditions and developments there judged that the West should never totally exclude the possibility of future military intervention in the region. This indeed was what the Soviets and certain anti-Western regimes feared; at any point, if the delicate balance was upset, a vigorous Western (or Israeli) response might follow 'with unforeseeable consequences'. It was therefore argued that this vagueness of Western intentions in case of crisis had a stabilising influence.<sup>707</sup>

While NATO was slow to develop a Middle East strategy, the West was forced to respond to a specific Middle Eastern crisis in mid-1958. It was then that the second 'out-of-area' operation of the US Sixth Fleet took place. Camille Chamun, President of Lebanon, faced with internal political and religious turmoil, asked for active US aid to stabilise his position when the coup d'état in Iraq exacerbated his fears. Washington responded rapidly. Eisenhower authorised *Operation Blue Bat* on 15 July, and the marine component of the Sixth Fleet was landed on the country under cover of maritime aviation and warships. This was the first invocation and application of the Eisenhower Doctrine which since January 1957 provided for US intervention

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<sup>707</sup> NATO/RDC/58/387, Report on the Situation in the Middle East, 30-October-1957.

upon request of any Middle Eastern country threatened by international communism. Very soon, order was restored. Again, the US Sixth Fleet proved not only a military, but also an effective political-diplomatic tool.<sup>708</sup> But this was a unilateral American initiative and response, without any consultation with the NATO allies, and once again the alliance failed to undertake a collective action and deal with an 'out-of-area' problem in the eastern shores of Mediterranean.

By 1957-8 the United States was pursuing its own policy in the Middle East, and virtually no room was left for any future NATO political role in the region. Indeed, while the State Department continued fully to accept the idea of consultation it resisted any suggestion that the Council of NATO or any of its members could have anything approaching a veto on policy.<sup>709</sup> It should be noted that the British wished to coordinate their views on a Middle East policy with the Americans, if the next NAC meetings deal with the problems of that area. The UK diplomacy viewed that it should seize any opportunity – if given – to inject its thinking concerning the Middle East into NATO and 'enlist' allied support for British policy there.<sup>710</sup> Quite different was the Italian and Greek approach to the problems in the Middle East. During his visit in Athens in January 1959, the Italian Prime Minister Amintore Fanfani held identical views with Karamanlis and Averoff. Both parties agreed that NATO and the West in general should adopt a more 'realistic' policy towards the Arabs – and Nasser in particular – to achieve the containment of Soviet penetration of the area.<sup>711</sup> The Greeks and the Italians held that Nasser could not be won over by the West, but the

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<sup>708</sup> Wylie, 'The Sixth Fleet', pp.55-60.

<sup>709</sup> TNA/FO/371/137801/WUN1071/128, Washington to FO, 20-November-1958.

<sup>710</sup> TNA/FO/371/137800/WUN1071/114, Ramsbotham Minute on Discussions on the Middle East in NATO, 24-October-1958.

<sup>711</sup> KKA, 3, p.344.



latter could secure Egyptian acquiescence if it recognised the legitimacy of Nasser's drive for independence and his neutrality in the Cold War.

Another impediment to the formulation of an effective NATO strategy beyond the eastern part of the Southern Flank was the persistent inability of the alliance to coordinate effectively its policy with the Middle East defence schemes, in this case with the Baghdad Pact. During 1958 the Baghdad Pact countries, along with the United States, took the initiative to seek the establishment of liaison in military matters between the Baghdad Pact and NATO (as well as SEATO). In early 1959 the Baghdad Pact Military committee favoured the establishment of effective military liaison between the two organisations, particularly a joint committee between CINCSOUTH and the Baghdad Pact Military Planning Staff.<sup>712</sup> Nevertheless, most NATO members (and principally Canada, Norway and Denmark) were still very hesitant to endorse coordinated planning with the Baghdad Pact, because they did not wish to get entangled with other defence organisations. Only Turkey (and probably Britain) favoured some sort of coordinated planning, while within the Eisenhower administration existed both advocates and non-advocates of coordination. Therefore, virtually no decision towards the establishment of a military liaison could be taken by NAC.<sup>713</sup>

By the late 1950s the US Sixth Fleet had undertaken two 'out-of-area' operations of power projection, the latter resembling a traditional mission of 'gunboat diplomacy'. Certain NATO and US officials fully acknowledged and appreciated its deterrent value not only due to its well-known retaliatory capability and force

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<sup>712</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Policy Files, Box 86, Ankara to US Liaison Officer to CINCSOUTH, 19-February-1959.

<sup>713</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Policy Files, Box 86, State Department to US Liaison Officer to CINCSOUTH, 9-February-1959.

projection capacity, but also because of the term 'Sixth Fleet' per se (the 'brand name', if one could use this phrase on this occasion). For example, Norstad, during discussions with senior US and NATO naval officers (like CNO Admiral Arleigh Burke and SACLANT Admiral Jerauld Wright) emphasized the need to maintain the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, and not to substitute it by another US fleet due to an implementation of a policy of 'rotation by Fleets'. Norstad stressed that it was of paramount importance that the COMSTRIKFORSOUTH (Commander Striking Forces Southern Europe) and his staff should be not only as familiar as possible with such vital issues as operational plans and areas and the complex organizational structure within the Mediterranean area, but also well aware of existing national problems and customs and key national figures throughout that region. Norstad concluded that 'every John Q. Citizen in the countries bordering the Mediterranean knows exactly what is meant when the term "Sixth Fleet" is used and they take solace in its presence. In my opinion we cannot afford to lose either the term "Sixth Fleet" nor can we afford the long period of education which might be required to explain any appreciable change in the present order of things'.<sup>714</sup> Eventually, the Sixth Fleet was tied to that area and remained in the Mediterranean during the following decades. Apart from its power projection role, its primary mission remained the support of the Southern Flank and of SACEUR forces in general, as a naval nuclear counter-offensive striking force.<sup>715</sup> As NATO manoeuvres in the Mediterranean demonstrated, in this theatre the alliance relied heavily on Sixth Fleet carriers for support.<sup>716</sup>

While the situation in the Middle East remained largely unfavourable for the West, things appeared more promising at the Balkan theatre. Greece and Yugoslavia

<sup>714</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Subject File, Box 98, Norstad to Burke, 22-January-1959.

<sup>715</sup> NATO/M.C.70, Report on the Minimum Essential Force Requirements, 29-January-1958.

<sup>716</sup> NARA/RG59/A1.3096, Box 17, NATO Exercises, 8-April-1958; also Sokolsky, *Seapower*, p.60.

continued to cooperate closely in the political-diplomatic and military levels during 1958. Both countries, though for different reasons, felt more or less isolated in a period of great international tension, and considered each other the only friend in the region.<sup>717</sup> Even so, during the Yugoslav-Greek-UAR meeting in Brioni on 8-9 July 1958, Greece turned down Nasser's suggestion for the formulation of a tripartite neutralist axis, and Karamanlis himself made plain that Greece would remain a 'truthful NATO member'. Significantly, the Yugoslavs urged the Greeks to remain in NATO as Greece's value to Yugoslavia lay primarily to the provision of an indirect link with the Western defence system.<sup>718</sup> Indeed, Karamanlis and Averoff were not eager to bluff by threatening to withdraw from NATO, although Greek participation in the Brioni meeting could be interpreted as a forewarning signal to the NATO allies.

In 1959 the Greek-Yugoslav entente reached its peak. On 2-6 March, in the aftermath of the Greek-Turkish rapprochement which transformed once more the regional balance, Tito met the Greek leadership in Rhodes. Apparently, the Yugoslav leader wished to find out if Greek policy of cooperation with Yugoslavia would change; he did not seem enthusiastic about the Cyprus settlement, fearing that Greece might lean towards Turkey in foreign policy affairs. Tito also worried that their Greeks would alter their approach towards the Arab world, where Athens and Belgrade held identical views at least since 1955-6. For their part, Karamanlis and Averoff sounded Tito out on a possible revival of the tripartite Balkan Pacts, which was also Turkey's strong desire. However, Tito refused: at this stage he attached great importance to his neutral position and refused to reactivate the military clauses of the Balkan Pacts. But since he was also unwilling to renounce the Balkan Pacts, it was

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<sup>717</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, pp.110-11, 113.

<sup>718</sup> *KKA*, 3, pp.162, 227.

agreed that these 'should lie dormant for the time being'.<sup>719</sup> Moreover, the Yugoslavs were partly influenced in this decision by their suspicions of Turkey which seemed to support Albanian irredentism in Kosovo.<sup>720</sup>

Tito noted that bilateral 'excellent' relations 'should be fostered even further', and, particularly, 'the Staff visits and contacts should continue'. The Greek leadership assured Tito that the Greek-Yugoslav entente was valid, but explained that the situation had become more complicated regarding the continuation of bilateral military contacts; the Turks were quite nervous because they were excluded from regional cooperation and the Greeks appeared sensitive to this, wishing to preserve the recent Greek-Turkish rapprochement. Indeed, Tito recognised the substance of Greek reserve, agreed that Greece should keep Turkey informed on any future Greek-Yugoslav military contacts and talks, and declared his willingness to seek the improvement of Yugoslav-Turkish relations.<sup>721</sup> In any case, the Tito-Karamanlis meeting confirmed the close cooperation of the two countries, which was consummated on 18 June when Foreign Ministers Averoff and Popovic signed in Athens eleven technical agreements and one protocol dealing with various issues of mutual interest and concern.<sup>722</sup>

In essence, in 1959 Athens found itself in a central position between Belgrade and Ankara and their conflicting views, as the Turks wanted the full revival of the Balkan Pact, and the Yugoslavs were unwilling either to provoke the Soviets or jeopardise their position in the emerging non-aligned movement; but they were equally unwilling to loosen the Greek-Yugoslav de facto special partnership. Thus

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<sup>719</sup> TNA/FO/371/144530/RG10392/2, Athens to FO, No.22, 6-March-1959.

<sup>720</sup> *KKA*, 4, p.110.

<sup>721</sup> *KKA*, 4, pp.18, 20.

<sup>722</sup> TNA/FO/371/144530/RG10392/5, Athens to FO, No.27 Saving, 20-June-1959.

Greece tried to keep a delicate balance between the two parties, 'acquiring as many benefits' as it could. The military contacts with Yugoslavia (though not at General Staff level, in order to minimise Turkish anxiety) continued, and the Greek leadership decided to keep the Turks informed and explained to them that the Greek-Yugoslav partnership might soon evolve in a tripartite one to include Turkey as well.<sup>723</sup> Greece kept the other NATO allies informed about the content of the Tito-Karamanlis talks, while general Dovas continued to inform CINCSOUTH of the military contacts between Greece and Yugoslavia.<sup>724</sup>

In May 1959 Karamanlis and Averoff paid an official visit in Turkey and held talks with President Çelâl Bayar, Menderes and Zorlu. Both parties sought to revive the Greek-Turkish friendship and partnership. According to the Greeks, the Greek-Turkish cooperation appeared to be a 'historical necessity': both countries formed 'a small islet surrounded by a vast Slav-communist sea'. The Greek and Turkish leadership discussed various issues, including their position within NATO, the future of the tripartite Balkan cooperation and the situation in the Middle East. Although they expressed identical views regarding the future of NATO and the need for deeper Atlantic cohesion and solidarity, and agreed to keep the Balkan Pacts dormant, they interpreted the situation in the Middle East quite differently. At any rate, the Karamanlis-Averoff visit in Turkey signalled the resurgence of Greek-Turkish cooperation.<sup>725</sup> This caused considerable nervousness to the USSR, which decided to exert diplomatic pressure on Greece, on the grounds that the latter was ready to accept US IRBMs on its territory. Such development would be considered by

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<sup>723</sup> KKA, 4, p.19.

<sup>724</sup> TNA/FO/371/144530/RG10392/3, UK Delegation in NATO to FO, 11-March-1959; DDEL/Norstad/Subject File/box\_95, Admiral Brown to Norstad, 1-July-1959.

<sup>725</sup> KKA, 4, pp.59-70.

Moscow as ‘a hostile act against the USSR and the preservation of peace’, and would cause significant damage to Greek-Soviet relations. Khrushchev reiterated the implicit Soviet threats later in May and in June against both Greece and Italy, which responded accordingly and dismissed Soviet accusations.<sup>726</sup>

**ii) *M.C.70 and the Southern Flank countries: military considerations and economic reality.***

NATO’s new strategic posture, outlined in M.C.70 early in 1958, had particular implications for the countries of the Southern Flank. The transition to nuclearization brought with it a general reduction a general reduction of conventional forces and for the three states of the Eastern Mediterranean this meant a significant cutback of land forces (from a total of 47 divisions in 1958 to 32 by 1963).<sup>727</sup> While Italy, Greece and Turkey could not reverse this trend, they nevertheless sought to acquire additional forces. Greece and Turkey referred to their proven ability to raise significant forces (in sharp contrast with most NATO members). This was an undeniable achievement but it nevertheless remained true that in most cases NATO qualitative standards had not been met. As such, the military integrity of the Southern Flank in the new era of M.C.70 remained uncertain.

Each of the three Southern Flank states continued to have flaws in their defence establishments, although considerable progress had been made on this field. A detailed account of each country’s military situation – a topic which has not been

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<sup>726</sup> Ibid, pp.84-90.

<sup>727</sup> NATO/C-VR(58)21, Verbatim Record of the NAC ministerial meeting, 15-April-1958.

covered adequately by historiography – follows. As early as December 1958 Italy had informed the NATO authorities that it would be unable to allocate the necessary resources to cover fully its needs for the subsequent period. The main problem of the Italian armed forces was the existing manpower and equipment deficiencies in the majority of the units, particular in the army, as well as the shortage of operational reserves and ammunition in all three services. In particular, progress in implementing the Italian Army reorganisation programme had been slow, while the combat effectiveness of the land forces was adversely affected by the low manning level of M-day units and inadequate training of the reserves. In addition, there was a shortage of many TO&E equipment items (like non-combat vehicles).<sup>728</sup> Little, if any, progress had been made until the end of 1959, although Italy had recognised that the qualitative improvement of its armed forces (especially its land forces) was of paramount importance, even at the expense, if necessary, of their numerical strength. A very critical shortfall in specialists and regular cadres existed, and this could only be alleviated by enlisting more regulars and long service personnel and improving the specialist training programmes. Furthermore, although an industrialised country, Italy was relying almost entirely on external aid to implement the ‘badly needed’ modernisation programme of its land forces (conventional weapons and other material). Last but not least, NATO assessed that there were inadequate stocks of war reserves and insufficient logistics to support the Italian Army in sustained military operations. Therefore, it was estimated that the Italian Army had a moderate combat effectiveness.<sup>729</sup>

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<sup>728</sup> NATO/C-M(58)141, Part II, Report on the 1958 Annual Review – Italy, 6-December-1958.

<sup>729</sup> NATO/C-M(59)94, Part II, Report on the 1959 Annual Review – Italy, 3-December-1959.

The situation appeared better in the Italian Navy which, despite shortfalls in main naval units, was making considerable progress towards meeting the qualitative standards. By the end of the 1950s, NATO judged that Italy had a high combat potential at sea. Fleet units had reached a satisfactory level of training, while a considerable construction programme of vessels, carried out mainly in Italy, was being implemented. Indeed, the navy was the only service which could benefit from the national armaments-production capacity. Of course, problems still existed, like deficiencies in electronic counter measures (ECM) and electronic equipment as well as in other material and supplies. Perhaps the most critical flaw was in ASW operations (particularly due to shortfalls in patrol craft, medium-range maritime patrol aircraft and anti-submarine helicopters).

As regards the Italian Air Force, despite some rather temporary progress, its combat readiness (both in aircrews and aircraft) fell well below NATO standards. During the first half of 1959 the average combat ready rate was only 51 per cent, seriously affecting the effectiveness of the service. Shortages of regulars and specialists still existed but those needs were gradually covered. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the C&R system should be further improved to meet the desired standards and achieve a 24-hour capability. Contrary to the Italian Navy, the Air Force was counting heavily on external aid for its aircraft and missiles. On the plus side, by late 1959 the service was making considerable progress towards achieving an operational status for the IRBM units, had obtained the facility to train its aircrews in the delivery of nuclear weapons and had incorporated three battalions of SAM. Overall, it was judged that the Italian Air Force had a moderate ability to carry out its



mission.<sup>730</sup> For their part, the Italians indicated to US officials that the Italian Air Force should be given modern equipment (particularly supersonic aircraft and radar equipment), otherwise it would be unable to accomplish its mission. The US authorities recognised those requirements, directing MAP towards achieving a degree of modernisation.<sup>731</sup>

The Italian defence effort cannot be assessed without taking into account financial and economic considerations. The Italians were devoting additional resources in the defence budget to increase the potential of their forces, while additional sources would be made available through structural reforms. Emphasis would be given to the army, and then to the air force, but in any case the Italian authorities argued that even those increased defence appropriations would not suffice to raise the Italian forces to the required level, both in the personnel and the equipment field. They viewed that their national effort in the financial field had ‘reached the limit’ and that, therefore, the fulfilment of their plans depended on a substantial increase of external aid over the coming years. In any case, it was acknowledged that accumulated shortages of equipment (mainly, though not exclusively, in the army) called for an enormous effort, and it seemed unlikely that all deficiencies of equipment and shortfalls in personnel could be made good in the near future. In essence, despite the rapid progress of the Italian economy, Rome remained unwilling to undertake a major defence effort to correct the serious flaws of its military establishment. Indeed, the share of the GNP devoted to defence actually dropped during this period, and despite the annual increase in the military budget, the downward trend would obviously continue in the future due to the considerable rise of

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<sup>730</sup> NATO/C-M(58)141, Part II, Report on the 1958 Annual Review – Italy, 6-December-1958; NATO/C-M(59)94, Part II, Report on the 1959 Annual Review – Italy, 3-December-1959.

<sup>731</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Country File, Box 49, Chief MAAG Italy to CINCEUR, 12-September-1959.

the Italian national product. Furthermore, the defence effort placed very little strain on the country's industry, which had ample capacity, 'at present lying idle', for the production of military equipment. The NATO specialists noted that the proportion of Italian resources devoted to the procurement of equipment was among the lowest of NATO members with a large armaments-production capacity'.<sup>732</sup>

As we shall see, Greece and Turkey were a different case. Greece initially declared its intention to maintain and build up additional land and naval forces which were envisaged as necessary for the country's defence (particularly in implementing a forward defence and protecting sea transport and communication). Of course, another ulterior motive, until 1959, was the need to retain a relative balance with the Turkish forces (and also keep those additional forces under national command).<sup>733</sup> NATO experts believed that such additional goals would probably exceed Greek capabilities; the level of defence spending was so high that it had already approached the limit of what Greece could afford, and the budgetary deficit was only being met due to the provision of US economic aid. Moreover, any effort to maintain additional forces might endanger the quality of NATO-assigned forces. In any case, the Greeks reassured the alliance that priority would be given to the attainment of M.C.70 requirements which would demand a tremendous effort.<sup>734</sup>

Indeed, by the late 1950s, despite the great effort made and the considerable progress achieved, the Greek military establishment still faced significant deficiencies. Generally, there was a significant shortfall in regulars (particularly specialists and technicians), and thus the Greek government had to take corrective

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<sup>732</sup> NATO/C-M(59)94, Part II, Report on the 1959 Annual Review – Italy, 3-December-1959.

<sup>733</sup> Hatzivassiliou, *Greece*, p.76; Stefanidis, *Asymmetroi Hetairoi*, p.267.

<sup>734</sup> NATO/C-M(58)141, Part II, Report on the 1958 Annual Review – Greece, 6-December-1958.

action soonest: more long-service men should be enlisted, since reliance upon conscripts could not meet successfully the army's expanding needs as more complex equipment was being introduced. Moreover, all services were faced with growing obsolescence of equipment and shortages in certain categories of supplies, like POL. Therefore, despite the priority given to them, the combat readiness and effectiveness of NATO forces was inadequate, and greater emphasis should be placed on meeting the qualitative standards. The situation was critical in the army, where much of the equipment was obsolete (or even lacking) and needed replacement. Modern hardware could only come from external aid, since the national defence production facilities were confined virtually to ammunition plants. Shortages in tanks and other vehicles led the NATO specialists to give priority on equipping the XX armoured division over the creation of organic tank battalions within the infantry divisions. Shortages and obsolescence of communications and electronics equipment hampered the effectiveness of the army's command, control and communication system, while logistics remained insufficient. Last but not least, low manning levels impeded the effectiveness of M-day and reserve units. Overall, the Greek Army was considered to have a moderate combat potential.<sup>735</sup>

The Greek Navy's condition seemed to be quite better. Despite persisting problems (as the low proportion of regulars – particularly engineers and electronics specialists – aboard ships) the situation in personnel had improved, while considerable progress had been made in modernising obsolescent vessels; the modernisation programme would last until 1963. For the time being, the bulk of naval forces had a high combat potential. However, a great effort should be contemplated to solve the obsolescent problem, because this would soon compromise seriously the navy's

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<sup>735</sup> NATO/C-M(59)94, Part II, Report on the 1959 Annual Review – Greece, 3-December-1959.

effectiveness. Despite the existence of a few shipyards in Greece, these could only build small vessels, so the Greek Navy was completely dependent on external aid to replace its obsolete main units. Therefore, the NATO authorities did not support an increase of the naval forces beyond M.C.70 requirements. As for the Greek Air Force, most essential requirements had been met by MDAP, although delays in deliveries did not enable the timely formation of all-weather fighter and reconnaissance squadrons; the same applied for the one *Nike* SAM unit which would be activated in, or after, 1960, due to delays in the delivery of equipment. The existing air force units had a very high aircraft combat readiness, but more effort should be placed on improving the aircrew combat ready rate; the latter was affected after a reduction in the annual flying hours per pilot took place, due to POL limitations. Finally, as in the other services, there was a shortage of regulars, specialists, and other long-service personnel. Those flaws led the NATO officials to estimate that the Greek Air Force had a moderate combat potential, but the prospect was generally positive.<sup>736</sup>

In the late 1950s, Greece continued to increase steadily its defence effort, devoting almost 6 per cent of its GDP in 1958, or a third of its annual budget. It was therefore acknowledged that this proportion compared ‘favourably with that of most members of the Alliance’. By 1959, that effort was supported, in approximately equal measure, by national resources and by external aid. National funds were allocated mainly to maintenance and operating expenditures, without being able to cover them fully; so, the rest was covered by Mutual Aid, which also financed almost the whole of new material and equipment needed for the Greek rearmament. In the near future, the Greek authorities intended to increase national defence expenditures in relation to

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<sup>736</sup> NATO/C-M(58)141, Part II, Report on the 1958 Annual Review – Greece, 6-December-1958; NATO/C-M(59)94, Part II, Report on the 1959 Annual Review – Greece, 3-December-1959.

the growth of the GNP. At any rate, the Greeks had always been eager to ensure that they were making full use of any material received under Mutual Aid by adjusting accordingly their own financial contribution (it can be argued that the obvious reason was Greek willingness to demonstrate the country's ability to absorb fully, and make good use of, US military assistance in order to justify demands for additional aid). In fact, it was estimated that implementation of the NATO military recommendations to Greece to meet the M.C.70 goals and standards would 'inevitably involve a considerable increase in national expenditures'; a significant increase in personnel would take place, particularly in the army, while an extensive modernisation and equipment programme was necessary in all three services. However, the shortcomings were so serious and so many, that they could be dealt with only if a considerable increase in the national financial effort, and, more importantly, if a significant increase in external aid, took place. But the NATO authorities accurately reckoned that 'the estimated increase (of external aid) needed is such, that it is doubtful whether it could be considered a practical possibility'. Therefore, it was probably chimerical to expect that Greece would be able to meet all NATO requirements.<sup>737</sup> It can be also argued that even the attainment of *all* M.C.70 goals seemed irrelevant, since Greek territory would remain indefensible in case of general war or a combined Soviet-Bulgarian local campaign towards the Aegean. So, evidently Greece's defence problem was a complex one and could not be solved by military means alone. The same applied to the Turkish case, and, to some extent, to Italy.

The Turkish financial effort to meet (or even exceed) its defence commitments remained significant. Although defence expenditures as a percentage of the GNP had dropped somewhat (to 4.8 per cent), even this was regarded as high

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<sup>737</sup> NATO/C-M(59)94, Part II, Report on the 1959 Annual Review – Greece, 3-December-1959.

given the country's need for economic development and the low standard of living. During this period, Turkey's major problems were hyperinflation and a similarly high foreign trade deficit, caused by the pursuit of the ambitious development programme of the Menderes government, which simply outstripped the ability of the national economy to support it.<sup>738</sup> In 1958 the Turkish economic situation deteriorated rapidly and almost got out of control. Faced with bankruptcy, Ankara had no option but to agree in late July on a stabilisation programme imposed by a consortium comprised by the United States, Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, the IMF and the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). Turkey had to carry out specific economic reforms in return for the rescheduling of its national debts and the provision of an aid package of \$359 million by the consortium.<sup>739</sup> Indeed, during that period US policy makers considered that the primary challenge in regard to Turkey was to persuade the Turkish officials to carry out the necessary stabilisation programme and economic reforms. A stable economy (and political system) would produce a national budget large enough to support increasing defence expenditure (not least for NATO purposes) in the future.<sup>740</sup>

In spite of those difficulties, Turkey planned to maintain more forces than the NATO-approved ones. Developments in 1958 had exacerbated Turkish fears, while after the Iraqi revolution Ankara had lost its last regional ally and was surrounded by hostile, or potentially hostile, countries. However, since Turkish defence spending had virtually reached the limit of the country's capacity, the cost of meeting the NATO-approved force levels would absorb, and probably exceed, any funds available for defence. Therefore, any effort to raise and equip supplementary forces would surely

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<sup>738</sup> NATO/C-M(58)141, Part II, Report on the 1958 Annual Review – Turkey, 6-December-1958.

<sup>739</sup> Aydin, 'Determinants', pp.103-39.

<sup>740</sup> *FRUS*, 1958-60, X, pp.772-3.

overstretch the Turkish economy and affect the qualitative standards of the NATO assigned forces. Although the Turks agreed to give priority to M.C.70 units, they argued that the supplementary forces should be included in M.C.70 goals.<sup>741</sup> In essence, since the Turkish Armed Forces relied exclusively on foreign aid for equipment, Ankara sought to achieve a considerable increase in external (that is, mainly US) assistance.

Indeed, Turkey could hardly meet even the operating costs of its current military establishment (allocating there 95 per cent of its defence expenditure). The slight quantitative reduction in Turkish contribution to NATO after the implementation of M.C.70 did not offset the prospective rise of operating costs in subsequent years caused by incorporation of modern hardware and the application of higher standards of readiness and training. Consequently, Turkey's ability to cover the equipment costs remained very limited, and in any case its industrial capacity sufficed only for the production of small arms and some types of ammunition. Therefore, the NATO specialists acknowledged that an increase in Mutual Aid deliveries would be inevitable, if the quantitative and especially the qualitative requirements were to be met. It should be also stressed that the Turkish defence budget was financing projects which served both civilian and military interests (particularly construction works like roads, bridges and port facilities) and were defined as military expenditures by Turkish rather than NATO standards.<sup>742</sup> In any case, JAMMAT emphasised in September 1958 that under existing circumstances, a real increase in Turkish military capacity could best be achieved by a substantial enhancement of training levels, rather than by stepped up deliveries of military hardware (which could not be absorbed and

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<sup>741</sup> NATO/C-M(58)141, Part II, Report on the 1958 Annual Review – Turkey, 6-December-1958.

<sup>742</sup> NATO/C-M(58)141, Part II, Report on the 1958 Annual Review – Turkey, 6-December-1958; NATO/C-M(59)94, Part II, Report on the 1959 Annual Review – Turkey, 3-December-1959.

utilised effectively).<sup>743</sup> Finally, in 1959 the Turks made an important reduction in the army numerical strength in order to save some money.

By late 1959 the alliance assessed that although the stabilisation programme had begun to bear some fruit, serious efforts would still have to be made to strengthen Turkey's financial stability and achieve a balanced economic development. It was therefore concluded that 'given the rapid population growth (rising at a rate of 3 per cent per annum) and the difficulties still facing Turkey in the development of her economy, it would not seem reasonable, at least in the short term, to urge a greater effort than this until the results of the present measures of redressment (sic) are consolidated'. The conclusion was that 'if the NATO military authorities' requirements for modernisation and stock levels are to be met on time, there is no escaping the conclusion that additional aid must be made available on an unprecedented level'.<sup>744</sup> But under existing circumstances, such an increase in economic and military assistance was not forthcoming.

In the late 1950s the Turkish Armed Forces were facing various problems. The most crucial were the inadequate C&R, EW, and command communications systems, the shortage of POL for all three services and of TO&E equipment and ammunition and spare parts in the army and air force. Equipment shortages in all services remained one of the major difficulties. The Turkish Army's effectiveness was affected by shortage of regulars (particularly specialists) shortfalls in modern equipment (mainly combat vehicles, artillery and small arms), the low manning level of existing material and inadequate logistics, while the reserves lacked training. Overall, it was considered that the land forces had a moderate capacity, but it was

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<sup>743</sup> *FRUS*, 1958-60, X, p.762.

<sup>744</sup> NATO/C-M(59)94, Part II, Report on the 1959 Annual Review – Turkey, 3-December-1959.



hoped that measures planned for the immediate future would soon increase the army's combat effectiveness. As regards the naval forces, the NATO officials noted that existing units, having reached a satisfactory level of training, had a high combat potential. However, the Turkish Navy as a whole had a moderate capability to carry out its mission, due to shortage of ships, shortfall in fuel stocks, and deficiencies in overall communications-electronics systems. Last but not least, a growing proportion of the existing ships was obsolescent and would be taken out of service in 1961, but no comprehensive programme existed for their timely replacement sometime in the early 1960s. Finally, the Turkish Air Force was in the process of modernisation, and a number of *F-100* fighter bombers had been received to replace *F-84Gs* in their strike role. In addition, some progress was being made in attaining a nuclear strike capability. According to NATO and national planning, from 1960 onwards *Nike* SAM units would be established in the Bosphorus, enhancing the A/A defence of Istanbul and the Straits. Due to delays in the delivery of *F-86D* aircraft, Turkey had not been able to start the build-up of all-weather fighter forces in 1959. Other deficiencies included the inadequate C&R system (partly due to ineffective communications) and the unsatisfactory combat ready rate of the aircrews. Therefore, despite the progress already made and hopes for a rise in qualitative standards in the near future, it was estimated that the air forces had a moderate combat potential.<sup>745</sup>

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<sup>745</sup> NATO/C-M(58)141, Part II, Report on the 1958 Annual Review – Turkey, 6-December-1958; NATO/C-M(59)94, Part II, Report on the 1959 Annual Review – Turkey, 3-December-1959.

### iii) *Nuclear weapons in the Southern Flank: the IRBM and Honest John cases*

On 4 October 1957 the USSR successfully launched *Sputnik 1*, the first artificial satellite, into orbit. This demonstrated that the Soviets had developed an ICBM capacity, and constituted a remarkable technological as well as psychological success for the Soviet bloc in the course of the Cold War. The Soviet accomplishment had serious short-term repercussions, because it came as a shock to the West and tended to undermine the entire NATO defence posture. Virtually for the first time, the Soviets acquired the capability to threaten directly the US territory with a full-scale strategic nuclear strike. Therefore, the validity of US nuclear deterrence, upon which the whole NATO security architecture was based (especially under the 'New Look strategy'), was seriously questioned. Consequently, the formation of a European nuclear deterrent force or at least the granting of a strong say in nuclear decision-making to the European allies, leading to the nuclearization of NATO, seemed imperative for security, political and psychological reasons.<sup>746</sup> In the late 1950s, the initial response was the deployment of US IRBMs (Inter-mediate Range Ballistic Missiles) in European territory.

Indeed, Washington sought to reassure as quickly as possible the European allies about the US strategic deterrent, since the first US ICBM (the *Atlas*) would not become operational before mid-1959, while the first *Polaris* SLBM submarines were expected to be operational in late 1960. In late 1957, four squadrons of *Jupiter* IRBMs were ready for deployment; hence Eisenhower and Dulles made the offer to deploy these missiles during the NATO Heads of Government meeting in Paris on 16-19 December 1957. Although NATO members unanimously agreed in principle to accept

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<sup>746</sup> Ralph Dietl, 'In Defence of the West: General Lauris Norstad, NATO Nuclear Forces and Transatlantic Relations 1956-1963', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 17/2 (2006), pp.347-92.

the offer, it was very soon clear that reaching agreements with potential host countries was a difficult and rather thorny issue, partly due to formidable Soviet reaction.<sup>747</sup> As we shall see, not all Southern Flank states felt able to become NATO nuclear outposts.

After the decision was taken to deploy US IRBMs in European territory, SACEUR Norstad was designated with the task to search for host countries. This proved a complex political procedure. Initially the US and NATO military authorities were mostly concerned with target coverage, so naturally the obvious position was on NATO's flanks, in close proximity to Warsaw Pact and Soviet targets. Soon, however, political considerations prevailed over the purely military ones. Therefore, France and Italy, which after Britain were the most important allies, were placed at the top of the list as potential host countries, while the frontline states but less influential allies, like Greece and Turkey, followed.<sup>748</sup>

In late 1957 Italy joined France and FRG into an initiative for research and production of 'the most advanced weapons' (apparently, this wording implied the production of nuclear warheads). The Italian entanglement to this short-lived project was quite reluctant and limited, and soon after its failure Rome once again demonstrated the strong Italian preference for an Atlantic security framework. Seeking close bilateral cooperation with the United States and the aggrandisement of Italy's status within NATO through nuclear-sharing, the Italian government seriously considered accepting the deployment of US *Jupiter* missiles, when approached by

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<sup>747</sup> Philip Nash, 'Jumping Jupiters: The US Search for IRBM Host Countries in NATO, 1957-59', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 6/3 (November 1995), pp.753-86.

<sup>748</sup> Ibid.

Norstad in February 1958.<sup>749</sup> Domestically, the Centre-Right government was under pressure by the Left, which strongly opposed the deployment of the IRBMs, while the Italian public appeared divided on the issue. Therefore, in the spring of 1958 the Italian policy makers informed the Americans that they did not wish to accept the missiles if they were the only Europeans allies doing so. Moreover, in late May Prime Minister Fanfani informed Eisenhower that he was interested on the deployment of the missiles in Italy, but insisted that any discussions should take place under maximum secrecy; the whole issue should not become a political one, but should remain a purely military matter. However, the Italians soon raised more conditions, mainly the funding of the IRBM deployment exclusively by the Americans and the provision of additional US aid for the Italian armed forces.<sup>750</sup>

After considerable delay and lengthy negotiations, a US-Italian agreement was signed on 26 March 1959. This provided for the deployment of two squadrons of *Jupiter* (each comprised of 15 missiles) in South-eastern Italy. The missiles were operated under a dual-key system: the Italian Air Force manned the missiles themselves, while US personnel controlled the nuclear warheads. The *Jupiters* were at SACEUR's disposal to implement NATO strategy both in times of peace and war, but the decision to launch them could be taken by him, only in agreement with the US and Italian authorities. The missiles became operational in late 1960 and, despite their questionable military value – they were becoming rapidly obsolescent and presented a vulnerable target – their deployment served significant political aims.<sup>751</sup> Italy acquired some kind of voice in NATO nuclear decision-making, while the deployment of the IRBMs marked the apogee of close bilateral US-Italian partnership. Last but not least,

<sup>749</sup> Leopoldo Nuti, 'Continuity and Change', pp.375-400.

<sup>750</sup> Nash, 'Jumping Jupiters', pp. 753-86.

<sup>751</sup> Leopoldo Nuti, 'Italy and the Nuclear Choices', pp.222-45.

and despite the protracted negotiations between American and Italian officials, Italy emerged as a reliable ally faithful to NATO; an ally able to overcome domestic pressure from the Left and determined not to yield under Soviet (or Yugoslav) threats and protests.

Generally, the Italian political and military leadership professed a strong interest in nuclear sharing. This included nuclear propulsion. By autumn 1959 the Italian government officially asked for US assistance to build a nuclear-powered submarine (this would not be a ballistic submarine, like the *Polaris* type, but would undertake 'conventional' operations). When completed, the nuclear submarine would be assigned to NATO for use either in the Mediterranean or elsewhere. The Italians did not want any US financial assistance, claiming that they would appropriate additional funds to construct the nuclear submarine. They also appeared determined to proceed with the programme even if US technical assistance was not forthcoming, because they considered Italian entry into nuclear propulsion field as 'most important from moral and psychological viewpoint in providing Italian Armed Forces with most modern up-to-date equipment'. They further pointed out that the implementation of this programme should not be deferred until all shortfalls in M.C.70 requirements were fulfilled, since in that case the programme would 'never begin'.<sup>752</sup> The US Defense Department asked for Norstad's view, and the SACEUR informed that he did not justify the construction of an Italian nuclear submarine as a military requirement for his command. Italian submarine missions could be accomplished satisfactorily with conventional vessels, while the pursuance of the project for a nuclear submarine

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<sup>752</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Country Series, Box 49, Office of Secretary of Defense to SACEUR Norstad and SACLANT Wright, 27-October-1959.

would inevitably impede attainment of M.C.70 force goals, whose fulfilment should constitute the first priority.<sup>753</sup>

As regards Greece's attitude, the situation was a complicated one. Indeed, in 1958-9 one of the main foreign and domestic Greek policy issues was the debate over the installation of nuclear weapons, and particularly IRBMs, in Greece. The evasive attitude of the Greek Government soon turned into a heated controversy in the internal scene, due to the rise of the Left after the May 1958 elections and the increasing anti-Western sentiments prevailing in Greek public opinion due to the Cyprus crisis. Indeed, the establishment of IRBMs in Greece became an issue of domestic political character, rather than a military one, and was linked with other unrelated matters, such as NATO attitude towards the Cyprus problem and the extent of US influence in Greece.<sup>754</sup>

On 2 January 1959 Norstad informed Melas and Sarper of his readiness to begin formal discussions with Greece and Turkey on possible IRBM deployments. SACEUR thought that both allies should be offered the missiles for strategic as well as political reasons, since both were frontline states but also regional rivals.<sup>755</sup> However, the Greek response was cool, and General Dovas informed Norstad that the Greek government was 'not opposed in principle' to the installation of *Thor* missiles in Greece (according to US plans, Greece would receive *Thor* IRBMs); the matter should be discussed during SACEUR's next visit to Greece (although no such trip had been planned for the foreseeable future).<sup>756</sup> Norstad and the US policy makers

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<sup>753</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Country Series, Box 49, Norstad to Office of Secretary of Defense, 30-October-1959.

<sup>754</sup> Lagani, 'U.S. Forces', pp.309-30; Stefanidis, *Asymmetroi Heteroi*, pp.163-8; Theodore Couloumbis, *Greek Political Reaction*, p.111.

<sup>755</sup> Nash, 'Jumping Jupiters', pp.753-86.

<sup>756</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Policy File, Box 89, Houghton (Paris) to State Department, 17-January-1959.

considered that if the Greeks were unwilling to accept the IRBMs, an additional squadron of those missiles should be deployed to Turkey. Norstad had always stressed that the Greeks should participate only if they felt that 'making this contribution to the NATO defence would be helpful to their internal and external interests'.<sup>757</sup> When in late January 1959 the newly appointed CINCSOUTH, Admiral Brown, visited Athens, the Greek policy makers reiterated their view that the issue of the deployment of IRBMs and other nuclear weapons on European territory was primarily a political matter: first and foremost, a decision should be taken in NATO that all member states should accept in principle the deployment of such weapons on their territory. Only then should NATO military authorities decide where those weapons should be eventually deployed.<sup>758</sup> Aware of increasing neutralist sentiments in the Greek public, neither Norstad nor the State Department (or the Pentagon) pressed the Karamanlis government to accept the IRBMs.

As State and Defense Department officials struggled to find a solution to the lack of adequate funds in order to deploy the IRBMs (the US policy makers had failed to estimate accurately the funding needs, and now they anticipated a shortage of MSP funds), and as Soviet-bloc pressure peaked once more during late spring and summer 1959, the Karamanlis government sought to put off talks with Norstad and the Americans indefinitely. Then, in June 1959, in the face of Greek deferment, Eisenhower himself began to question the wisdom and utility of placing IRBMs in Greece. Those missiles were already obsolescent, while their deployment in Greece would probably provoke the Soviets without adding much deterrent effect. The President sent a memorandum to McElroy on 3 June posing several questions on the

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<sup>757</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Policy File, Box 88, Houghton (Paris) to State Department, 20-January-1959.

<sup>758</sup> KKA, 3, pp.378-9.

virtue of deployment in Greece, a country ‘both small and exposed’. McElroy, after consultation with the JCS, responded that the total economic cost for that deployment would not be significant, that Greece offered promising target coverage, and that alternative NATO hosts for that IRBM squadron did not exist – for example, its deployment in Turkey was not considered a sound alternative for political as well as logistical reasons.<sup>759</sup>

High-ranking State and Defense Department officials (including McElroy and Under Secretary of State Douglas Dillon) stressed that it was important not to appear reversing course in the face of Soviet threats. Despite this, Eisenhower decided that the Greeks should be allowed to decide at a time of their own choosing whether to accept the missiles or not. By August 1959, however, the State and Defense Departments decided that a final decision should be taken: Greece should either accept the squadron in the near future, or this should be deployed elsewhere.<sup>760</sup> Norstad took the initiative to break the stalemate and on 31 August informed Michael Melas (who strongly advocated the deployment of IRBM’s in Greece) that the Greeks should decide ‘one way or another within next fortnight’, or else he would recommend that the squadron in question be allocated elsewhere.<sup>761</sup>

On 3 September Norstad met Averoff in Paris to discuss the issue. Averoff explained that his government favoured the acceptance of the IRBMs in principle, but wished to postpone a final decision ‘until such time as internal political repercussions could be safely absorbed’. He noted that the right moment had not been found during the previous twenty months, and claimed that at least until the official launch of

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<sup>759</sup> *FRUS*, 1958-60, X, p.661; also Nash, ‘Jumping Jupiters’, pp.753-86.

<sup>760</sup> Nash, ‘Jumping Jupiters’, pp.753-86.

<sup>761</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Policy Files/box\_88, Houghton to State Department, 31-August-1959.



independent Cyprus in February 1960, Karamanlis felt he could not take additional political risks by provoking the Greek public opinion. Thus the Greek government appeared to prefer, if at all possible, to continue to stall for indefinite time, but Norstad insisted on the need for a prompt decision.<sup>762</sup> Having no alternative, on 14 September the Greeks regretfully informed Norstad that they were unable to accept the missiles 'within the time limits set'.<sup>763</sup> Then, Norstad proposed that the construction of the *Thor* squadron destined for deployment in Greece was cancelled, and Eisenhower authorised the decision on 21 October 1959.<sup>764</sup>

The Greek government agreed to receive two units of *Honest John* tactical nuclear rockets, though. An initial settlement was signed on 6 May 1959 which granted launching systems (but not nuclear warheads, yet) to Greece. This was followed by the signature of three additional secret agreements (one on 30 December 1959 and two further on 17 June 1960) for the establishment of nuclear depots in Greece, the so called Special Ammunition Storage Sites whose construction would be funded by the NATO Infrastructure Fund.<sup>765</sup> We should bear in mind that, contrary to the IRBMs, the tactical nuclear missiles would be used to thwart a Bulgarian (or Soviet-Bulgarian) attack, even in the event of a localised war, and not against the USSR itself in a general war context (which would certainly bring about the destruction of Greece by Soviet nuclear reprisals). In any case, the Greek Armed Forces did not acquire a tactical nuclear capability before the early 1960s.

Turkey, however, was enthusiastic for the deployment of IRBMs on their territory. The Turkish ruling elite (including the governing Democratic Party, the

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<sup>762</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Policy Files/box\_88, Houghton to State Department, 3-September-1959.

<sup>763</sup> Nash, 'Jumping Jupiters', p.753-86.

<sup>764</sup> Stefanidis, *Asymmetroi Hetairoi*, p.182.

<sup>765</sup> Lagani, 'U.S. Forces', pp.327-9.

military, but also the opposition, mainly the Republican People's Party) all accepted gladly the deployment of US nuclear missiles. This was considered as a means to demonstrate Turkish firm commitment to NATO, secure the continuation of US economic and military aid, increase Turkey's leverage within NATO and in the Middle East, and acquire an effective deterrent to the, perceived as increasing, Soviet threat. Therefore, in the absence of any socialist or communist party, a general consensus on the desirability of accepting the missiles emerged in Turkey.<sup>766</sup> As early as January 1958 the US policy makers estimated that the Turks would be probably eager to accept the IRBMs and provide the sites in order to strengthen 'their hands with the US in bargaining for aid'.<sup>767</sup>

At the NAC meeting in December 1958 Norstad informed the Turks that they would get the missiles and very soon indicated that he was ready to initiate talks with them. However, the Defense Department instructed SACEUR to back off for the time being, because the Americans had to deal with funding difficulties of the IRBMs' deployment and an ensuing disagreement between the State and Defense Departments (the latter insisted for a quick implementation of the missiles' deployment).<sup>768</sup> Another issue was whether the IRBM's should be deployed in a remote area, or near a major Turkish city (like Izmir or Adana), close to significant military and transportation facilities, where large numbers of US personnel were already stationed.<sup>769</sup> This delay caused significant concern and nervousness to Ankara, and Sarper was continually pressed Norstad to resume talks as soon as possible. The

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<sup>766</sup> Nur Bilge Criss, 'Strategic Nuclear Missiles in Turkey: The Jupiter Affair, 1959-1963', *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 20/3, (September 1997), pp.97-122; Nash, 'Jumping Jupiters', pp.753-86.

<sup>767</sup> *FRUS*, 1958-60, X, p.744.

<sup>768</sup> *Ibid*, p.788; also Nash, 'Jumping Jupiters', pp.753-86.

<sup>769</sup> *FRUS*, 1958-60, X, p.794.

Turkish policy makers feared that the delay was primarily caused by US willingness to avoid provoking the Soviets, but Norstad reassured them.<sup>770</sup>

Irrespective of the funding issue, some State Department officials continued to doubt if IRBMs deployment in Turkey (and Greece) was politically sensible.<sup>771</sup> As regards Turkey, there was a perception that it constituted an aggressive nation, due to its demonstrated militancy during the crises over Cyprus, Syria and Iraq.<sup>772</sup> Moreover, concern was expressed about the prospect of an increase in the number of US personnel in Turkey since recently there had been ‘a rash of incidents’ in Turkey involving US personnel (particularly in Izmir, where sailors of the Sixth Fleet were causing numerous incidents). Further exacerbation of the community relations problem between the Turkish public and the Americans should be avoided.<sup>773</sup> Finally, despite those reservations, the Departments of State and Defense agreed in late April to authorise Norstad to resume negotiations with the Turks (and the Greeks) for the deployment of IRBMs.

Then the Turkish leadership indicated to Norstad that they wished to get the *Jupiters*, and in early May SACEUR requested that Washington proceed with the necessary bilateral negotiations. Two main issues emerged: the precise estimate of the construction cost and the location of the deployment, on the one hand, and the method of financing, on the other. During the summer those problems were addressed, while the Çiğli air base, near Izmir, was chosen as site for the missiles’ deployment (Çiğli

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<sup>770</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Policy Files, Box 89, Houghton to J.F. Dulles, 17-January-1959.

<sup>771</sup> DDEL/Norstad/Policy Files, Box 89, Timmons (State Department) to Thurston (Paris), 13-January-1959.

<sup>772</sup> Criss, ‘Strategic Nuclear’, pp.97-122.

<sup>773</sup> *FRUS*, 1958-60, X, pp.798-9, 802; for increasing communal tensions in the recent past, see NARA/RG59/A1.1317, Box 1, Jones to Rountree, 22-September-1958.

was being already developed to accommodate ‘sophisticated’ weapons).<sup>774</sup> The US Embassy in Ankara was finally authorised to initiate negotiations with the Menderes government to reach an agreement on the deployment of IRBMs. The Turks not only accepted, once more, the missiles, but appeared eager to sign the agreement as soon as possible.<sup>775</sup> Finally, on 18 September Turkey signed a note agreeing to the deployment of a squadron of fifteen *Jupiter* missiles on its territory. The United States ratified the agreement the following month and the missiles would become operational in 1962.<sup>776</sup>

Therefore, Italy and Turkey accepted the IRBMs, while Greece refused to give a timely answer. The Italians had chosen to participate energetically in nuclear sharing and decision making and strengthen their ties with the United States. Therefore, despite considerable domestic pressure from the Left against the deployment, they were the first, after the British, who reached an agreement with the US government. In any case, Italy was a relatively powerful NATO member and Italian aspirations for a potential serious role in allied nuclear sharing seemed justifiable. In Turkey, the Menderes government had consistently sought to increase the strategic value of the Turkish factor for the West – and the Americans in particular – and its decision to accept the US missiles was fully consistent with that policy. There was a general domestic consensus on that issue, and in any case, the relatively authoritarian Turkish political system and the absence of any left opposition meant the Turkish government did not confront any serious imperatives to accept the missiles.

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<sup>774</sup> *FRUS*, 1958-60, X, pp.807-8; also Criss, ‘Strategic Nuclear’, pp.97-122.

<sup>775</sup> *FRUS*, 1958-60, X, p.812.

<sup>776</sup> Criss, ‘Strategic Nuclear’, pp.97-122.

The Greek government felt unable to accept the IRBMs. Even after the Greek-Turkish rapprochement and the removal of any strains between Greece and NATO, a significant portion of Greek public opinion remained suspicious towards the alliance and the United States, while the Left had emerged as the major opposition political party during the May 1958 general elections and the Soviets were pressing relentlessly Athens to reject the deployment of US IRBMs. Overall, Greece had undergone a period of extreme internal and external pressures in 1958, and Karamanlis (and many of his ministers) apparently judged that both the country and the government needed a pause, or breathing spell. Moreover, we should bear in mind that most of the senior US and NATO officials (including President Eisenhower and SACEUR Norstad) never pressed Greece to accept the IRBMs, quite the contrary. The question remains whether Greece's refusal to accept the missiles demonstrated that the country was a somewhat 'evasive' or unreliable ally (particularly in conjunction with the previous Greek status of 'semi-withdrawal' from the integrated NATO command, since Greece had withdrawn twice its military personnel from HALFSEE in Izmir). Although it is difficult to give a definite answer, it is true that most US and NATO officials understood that under existing circumstances, Greece could hardly accept the IRBMs. Some of them (particularly of the State Department) were never fully convinced of the political wisdom of such a deployment, or expressed serious doubts for the military utility of those weapons. Nevertheless, it is also true that Greece failed to become part of the US nuclear deterrence within the framework of NATO. Furthermore, it is difficult to assess whether the Greek refusal had a long-term negative impact to the State and Defense Departments bureaucracy.

## ***Conclusion***

From October 1957 until late 1958 NATO and the West in general, had to deal with a series of various challenges and crises on many fields. At the military level, a new strategy was devised. This involved a substantial qualitative leap forward, which obviously meant increased defence spending. By 1958, the NATO authorities had appreciated fully the role of economic and financial factors to the overall military effort, and from 1958 onwards the Annual Review reports on each member country contained paragraphs not only on military considerations and recommendations, but also an analysis on the financial and economic situation. Nevertheless, the new strategy as described in M.C.70 could not address the endemic problem of NATO members' inability to allocate the necessary resources to meet the approved force-goals. Indeed, the main challenge for any NATO member country, and particularly the underdeveloped ones like Greece and Turkey, was how to maintain 'a proper balance between the essential requirements of economic development and the defence effort'.<sup>777</sup> Indeed, only the creation of a sound economic basis and the retention of monetary stability would enable a gradual increase of the national defence budget, and defence expenditures should be increased commensurately with the GNP; otherwise, relentless military spending might endanger financial stability and have adverse effects, as happened in Turkey in mid-1958. As regards the Greek case, NATO officials accurately predicted that the country's prospects to continue its economic development and thus bear successfully its defence burden lay in finding

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<sup>777</sup> NATO/C-M(59)94, II, Report on the 1959 Annual Review – Greece, 3-December-1959.

better outlet for its exports and in securing ‘the necessary financial aid through cooperation with her NATO allies or European economic organisations’.<sup>778</sup>

Generally, political crises of unprecedented scale in the southern region produced a highly flammable mix. First, Turkish insecurity and isolation was exacerbated after the coup in Iraq in July 1958, and soon after the Baghdad Pact was virtually dissolved. In addition, Turkey faced a major economic and a culminating political crisis, which threatened to destabilise it. On this occasion, the major Western countries and international economic organisations came to its rescue and imposed a monetary stabilisation programme. Second, and most significant, as the Cyprus problem reached its peak, the Western allies had to face an explosive fraternal dispute in Eastern Mediterranean. Despite Spaak’s efforts, NATO seemed unable to undertake a major political initiative, intervene actively or stabilise the situation before it was too late. Indeed, in essence the Cyprus dispute had been turned into a Greek-Turkish conflict, while Britain’s role and position appeared increasingly irrelevant to the core of the whole problem (as was demonstrated during the 1959 settlement). As Greece was pushed to the corner by Britain and Turkey, Greek withdrawal from NATO seemed probable during the fall of 1958. In any case, any Greek-Turkish or even Greek-NATO coordination in the military field had ceased from June 1958 onwards. Then, in fear that a possible Greek withdrawal would lead to complete regional isolation, the Turks proposed a compromise solution. The two parties managed to work out a ‘final’ settlement, and the British acceded.

In that sense, NATO had failed to offer any good offices. This was partly due to US reluctance to intervene, since naturally the other member countries would

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<sup>778</sup> NATO/C-M(59)94, I, Report on the 1959 Annual Review – General, 3-December-1959.

expect Washington to take the lead. However, one could argue that NATO proved in a sense a significant stabilising factor. Facing the prospect of total isolation (at a time when the economic crisis was also undermining political stability), Turkey sought to restore Greek-Turkish relations by proposing a compromise over Cyprus. By autumn 1958 the Turks had reached close to achieve partition of Cyprus. This would constitute a significant victory. Nevertheless, under current circumstances, that tactical victory could cause a major strategic setback: a possible Greek withdrawal from NATO (which might trigger an unforeseeable chain of events regarding Greece's future posture and international orientation) would cut off Turkey from NATO and the West. This was a risk the Menderes Government could not take. After all, since 1954-5 the primary Turkish argument against union was the fear of Turkey's encirclement from a friendly Greece, at a time when Ankara was also forming a Turco-Iraqi partnership which constituted the basis of the Baghdad Pact. If in late 1958 Greece was forced out of NATO, while Iraq was turning neutralist or potentially pro-Soviet, Turkey would be surrounded by hostile neighbours.

NATO and the United States did not constitute part of the Cyprus settlement. Had Cyprus become a NATO member, things might have evolved differently in subsequent years. Of course Cyprus lay outside the NATO area, but Greece, Turkey and Britain were NATO members, while the United States remained the dominant power in the Mediterranean. It would have been natural for Cyprus to be admitted into NATO and develop strong ties with the West. A possible establishment of a NATO base or headquarters on the island would have probably brought a significant degree of political stabilisation, particularly in the crucial initial period, and would have provided the opportunity for passions to calm and for the complex Cypriot



constitution to work. Nevertheless, despite NATO's failure to intervene timely and effectively in the Cyprus problem, this study argues that during 1955-9, and particularly in late 1958, the alliance indirectly and rather inadvertently, solely through its existence as the link between Greece and Turkey and the West, did provide a shield, a motive and a context for the containment of the Greek-Turkish crisis. Of course, this interpretation might be challenged by other scholars, who might wish to place more emphasis on NATO's evident impotence to solve intra-allied disputes.

## **CONCLUSION:**

### **The Southern Flank – Military Strategy or Political Stability in Depth?**

This thesis is the first document-based analysis of the Southern Flank in the 1950s, dealing with its establishment, military and political conditions and evolution in the 1950s. Although it does not contrast with what has been written by other NATO historians about more specific events (such as the conclusion and the dissolution of the Balkan Pacts, Greek and Turkish admission to NATO and the dispute over Cyprus), this study seeks to offer a comprehensive account and appraisal of Southern Flank politics and strategies, which is still missing from ‘grand’ NATO histories.

The main question that needs to be addressed, as regards the overall history of the Southern Flank in the 1950s, concerns grand strategy. What was the primary goal of the Southern Flank? Did NATO aim to provide effective military protection to Italy, Greece and Turkey, or to achieve a political ‘stability in depth’, as Assistant Secretary of State, George McGhee, put it in 1951, by integrating them in the Western defence system and the Western (or First) World in general?

From the beginning, NATO failed to develop and pursue a comprehensive and effective strategy in the Mediterranean. Several factors account for this. To a significant extent, geography determined strategy.<sup>779</sup> In sharp contrast with the other major fronts of the alliance (the Northern Flank, the Central region, and the Atlantic), the Southern Flank lacked geographic unity. The Mediterranean Sea constituted a unifying factor, but the Southern Flank was compartmentalized in three theatres of operations where three separate land and air battles would be fought: Northern Italy,

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<sup>779</sup> For the role of geography in shaping strategy, see Daniel Moran, ‘Geography and Strategy’, in John Baylis et al., *Strategy in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.122-40.

the Balkans, and Eastern Turkey. Furthermore, with the exception of the Italian frontier, where the situation was the least critical (at least in the sense that it did not directly border on Soviet bloc territory), NATO officials acknowledged that the alliance would probably have to deal with additional sub-theatres in the Southern Balkans and in Anatolia: for instance, even in case of local war, Greek forces would have to withdraw from Western Thrace in the face of Soviet-bloc superiority, thus leaving exposed the flanks of Turkish forces defending Eastern Thrace. Therefore, almost from the beginning, two separate battles would be fought in the Balkans, one in Greek Macedonia and another in Turkish Eastern Thrace and the Straits area. Moreover, in Anatolia, Turkish and any other available air or naval NATO forces were expected to deal not only with the major Soviet effort against North-eastern Turkey, but possibly also with one or two secondary Soviet attacks by amphibious and/or airborne troops on the Northern Turkish coast – not to mention an always volatile situation in the Middle East, where additional Soviet thrusts could be made.

However, these inherent difficulties were further exacerbated by the establishment of a complicated command structure in the Southern Flank, where two commands and ten sub-commands were finally set up in 1952-3. This command set-up (particularly of the naval forces) was established primarily to serve political considerations, while the military/strategic requirements were only partially met. Obviously, this led to confusion, and, at an early stage, even to Anglo-American competition.<sup>780</sup> As the first and second chapters have shown, the command arrangement in the Southern Flank before and immediately after the Greek and Turkish accession to NATO was the result of hard US-UK negotiations and of a

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<sup>780</sup> Dionysios Chourchoulis, 'High Hopes, Bold Aims, Limited Results: Britain and the Establishment of the NATO Mediterranean Command, 1950-1953', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 20/3 (September 2009), pp.434-452.

subsequent compromise solution close to US positions, taking also into account Italian, Greek and Turkish views.

It should be noted that the final command structure made more sense than British proposals to integrate or link Greece and Turkey with a future Middle East defence scheme (indeed, every such British-inspired regional defence scheme proved ill-fated – MEC, MEDO, Baghdad Pact/CENTO). Still, it appears that at least the Greek and Turkish forces were never integrated properly in the overall NATO command structure and seemed to function more as national forces rather than as allied ones. Indeed, the NATO-assigned land and air forces of Greece and Turkey would be commanded by the regional land and air headquarters of the Alliance in Izmir (HALFSEE and SIXATAF respectively). However, COMLANDSOUTHEAST and SIXATAF's commander would have to command and control, but essentially not *coordinate* (although officially, the latter was supposed to be their main task) the Greek and Turkish forces. In essence, these forces would fight different battles in separate sub-theatres, since, as NATO acknowledged, the Greek regions of Western Thrace and Eastern Macedonia were indefensible; hence no contact between Greek and Turkish land forces would be maintained. In addition, at least until the late 1950s both Greece and Turkey lacked completely the ability to counterattack against Soviet-bloc forces advancing towards the Aegean and the Straits, and therefore there was no realistic possibility to coordinate their forces to launch a concerted counter-attack to drive Soviet-bloc forces from Thrace back to Bulgarian territory.

In any case, after 1955 the problematic command structure and the weakness on the military level assumed secondary importance, as Greek-Turkish relations deteriorated significantly. Greek-Turkish military cooperation received a severe blow.

Thus mutual trust could not be restored easily, while the threat of a repetition of similar assault was looming on the horizon each time Greek-Turkish relations reached a crisis point over Cyprus. Moreover, Turkey threatened Greece twice with war (in 1956 and in 1957) and this could hardly contribute to Greek-Turkish military cooperation within the framework of NATO. Furthermore, HALFSEE's function was seriously impaired twice, during September 1955 and particularly from June 1958 until February 1959, when Greece withdrew its officers from Izmir, and in the second case, refused to participate in any NATO activity where the Turkish element was also present. It is obvious that the effective Greek withdrawal from NATO's regional command structure, in conjunction with the subsequent threat to leave NATO in autumn 1958, came also as a major political blow to the Alliance. The latter proved unable to deal with its first, most persistent and lasting intra-allied dispute.

The geographic reality, the complex command structure, the competitive US-UK relations at an early stage, and the subsequent rupture in UK-Greek and Greek-Turkish relations prevented the integration of Southern Flank national strategies and forces. Thus the Southern Flank's function appeared problematic on several occasions. For example, in 1953-4 Greece and Turkey sought to establish close political and military bonds with Yugoslavia to enhance their security, but did not coordinate their policy with Italy; similarly, the Standing Group powers did not coordinate their own efforts towards Yugoslavia with the concurrent Greek-Turkish-Yugoslav efforts, and finally alienated Tito who preferred the conclusion of a tripartite Balkan Alliance. Moreover, from 1955 until early 1959 Greece and Turkey followed national strategies on crucial topics. The former tried and to some extent managed to gain Arab support for the Cypriot cause, and gradually forged a bilateral

de facto 'special relationship with Yugoslavia'. The latter, taking full advantage of its focal position on the defence of the Middle East and its greater leverage within NATO, collaborated with Britain on the Cyprus question trying to isolate the Greeks, and undertook a strongly anti-Nasserite stand in Middle Eastern affairs. In the light of all these, the Southern Flank in the 1950s was a political situation rather than a military strategy of the alliance.

Military weakness aggravated the predicament. The Southern Flank was a special case during the 1950s as regards the implementation of NATO strategy, simply because Greece and Turkey wanted but lacked the economic base to implement NATO strategy, whereas Italy, with its sounder economy, preferred to concentrate its efforts on development rather than security. For example, the MC.48 strategy applied only theoretically to this region. On the one hand, it did not provide for any reduction in Italian, Greek or Turkish force goals, as was the case for most NATO members. On the other, although NATO planning placed great emphasis on the extensive use of tactical nuclear weapons to retard or arrest a Soviet-bloc advance in Italian, Greek, and Turkish soil, in fact allied nuclear retaliatory capability in the Southern Flank was not enhanced. The same applies to a considerable extent to the subsequent NATO strategy as envisaged in M.C.70, which provided for an extensive modernisation of the Allied armed forces and called for a reduction of conventional forces and for a sharp qualitative improvement of NATO-assigned forces. Again, the Southern Flank countries were reluctant to accept a reduction of their forces, because they wished to keep additional ones under national command for their own purposes. They did so despite the fact that they recognised, along with NATO authorities, that

even the attainment of M.C.70 standards would require a tremendous effort and that no funds existed for the maintenance of additional forces.

Another central issue was the relative disinterest of most allies (with the exception of Washington and London) about the politics and strategy in the Mediterranean, and even more on out-of-area areas directly affecting the Southern Flank's defence posture or political stability (such as Yugoslavia, Cyprus and the Middle East). With the exception of the Southern Flank countries, NATO members considered as the Alliance's first and utmost aim to deter (and if necessary, defeat) Soviet aggression against Western Europe. The defence of the Mediterranean remained a desirable goal, but, taking into account the burdens of the alliance in the crucial Central Region, not a priority. For the majority of NATO members, there was little to choose between the Central and the Southern Fronts.

Indeed, as regards the Southern Flank area, after 1952 the United States controlled almost everything concerning the military organisation and preparedness of the Italians, and particularly of the Greeks and the Turks. American influence in Greece and Turkey had been significant since 1947, not least because of the continuing presence of JUSMAGG and JAMMAT (JUSMAT after 1958) and the central importance of US economic and military aid to the function of the military machine and state apparatus of both countries. Therefore, it was not surprising that in the face of relative NATO disinterest towards the Mediterranean, and in the absence of any alternative Western power centre which could attract them (for example the EEC/EU in the future), Rome, Athens, and Ankara all sought to establish a better bilateral relationship with Washington to acquire greater US military commitment and get increased economic aid. Therefore, in the 1950s the United States succeeded to a

considerable degree in stabilising politically Italy, Greece and Turkey, and in deterring a Soviet-bloc aggression, not least through extending US security commitment by pressing for, and achieving, their inclusion in NATO. US aid and the military effort of the Italians, and especially that of the Greeks and the Turks, contributed to a significant increase of their respective military capabilities. However, though to a different degree, the Southern Flank countries were still unable to defend themselves effectively against a major Soviet-bloc attack.

NATO aimed and managed to deter Soviet-bloc aggression against the three Southern Flank members to an equal degree, and Washington wanted to keep every single ally in the Western camp. However, this did not mean that during the 1950s those three states were viewed by NATO and the United States as being of equivalent status. This was demonstrated vividly on the field of Allied defence strategy. Italy was regarded as the most important Southern Flank member. It was a large European country with a considerable economic and industrial potential and a former great power, and additionally it covered the flank of Western Europe. Moreover, for geographical reasons, it was also the most defensible of the three Southern Flank countries.

Greece, on the other hand, was the most vulnerable NATO member because it lacked strategic depth and had inadequate forces to mount an effective forward defence. Although the Greek defence problem was ameliorated after the signature of the 1953-4 Balkan Pacts, these were soon neutralized. Before 1953 and after 1955, NATO policy makers acknowledged that Greece would not be able to repel even a Bulgarian attack, let alone a determined Soviet bloc attack.<sup>781</sup> As the Greek military

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<sup>781</sup> NATO/M.C.14/1, Report by the Standing Group on Strategic Guidance, 9-December-1952.



establishment was gradually strengthened, by 1957-8 NATO believed that it could retard a Bulgarian attack along the Struma line, and undertake a brief delaying action in Northern Greece in the event of a major Soviet-bloc advance in which the Red Army would participate.<sup>782</sup>

Turkey, however, was regarded as *partially* defensible, despite the fact that as the only NATO country bordering with the USSR, it would most probably be attacked by strong Bulgarian and especially Soviet land, air, and even naval forces. For this reason its strategic importance to the West was paramount. US and NATO strategists believed that due to the existence of significant strategic depth in Anatolia, the numerous Turkish forces would be able to absorb the Soviet blows and halt the advance of Soviet and Bulgarian forces. Therefore, a large portion of Turkey, particularly the central Anatolian plateau, could and should be held, to threaten the flank of any Soviet advance in the Middle East and become a platform for the launch of NATO air strikes against Soviet forces and on war sustaining resources in the USSR.<sup>783</sup> Essentially, as the Americans explained to the Greek leadership, NATO prescribed completely different military roles for Turkey and Greece.<sup>784</sup> Hence between 1952 and 1959 the former received over twice as much US military aid than the latter.<sup>785</sup>

NATO played a significant stabilizing role in the region, though. This was perhaps also because NATO nuclear deterrence worked, and thus its flawed military strategy was never put to test. As regards NATO's stabilising influence, the extension of the Atlantic Alliance in Eastern Mediterranean filled a power vacuum and, after

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<sup>782</sup> *FRUS*, 1955-7, XXIV, p.590.

<sup>783</sup> NATO/SGM-600-54, Capabilities Plan ACE 1957, 10-September-1954.

<sup>784</sup> *KKA*, 1, pp.278-80.

<sup>785</sup> Theodore Coulombis, *The United States, Greece, and Turkey*, p.178.

Italy (which was a founding NATO member), tied Greece and Turkey with the West. This was a major accomplishment, if compared with the course undertaken by many neighbouring countries, particularly on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean and in the Middle East. These states (Egypt, Syria and Iraq during the 1950s) adopted a neutralist or anti-western (though not essentially pro-Soviet) position.

However, NATO's effort to stabilise politically the Eastern Mediterranean, though generally successful, experienced a serious failure with regard to the Cyprus issue. First of all, surprisingly, the Southern Flank's success in deterring Communist aggression produced an adverse effect. When Greece and Turkey eventually joined NATO in 1952 they obtained a strong and definite security guarantee which satisfied their primary foreign policy goal. Then, they enhanced further their defence position vis-à-vis the Soviet bloc through the conclusion of the Balkan Pacts. After that, they felt able to devote their energy to other issues, such as the future of Cyprus. So long as Soviet pressure appeared imminent, Greece had not been willing to raise the Cyprus question; similarly, in 1947 Turkey had not opposed the incorporation of the Dodecanese Islands to Greece. However, in the aftermath of Stalin's death and during the mid-1950s reduction in Cold War tensions, Athens was ready to press Britain relentlessly for the application of the principle of self-determination to Cyprus, while Ankara sought to avert such development at any cost, including that of the complete disruption of Greek-Turkish partnership.<sup>786</sup>

In addition, as UK-Greek and Greek-Turkish relations deteriorated, NATO became an arena for a power struggle over an out-of-area issue, particularly as the British and the Turks tried to push the Greeks in to a corner and the latter often fell in

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<sup>786</sup> Ronald Krebs, 'Perverse Institutionalism: NATO and the Greco-Turkish Conflict', *International Organisation* 53/2, (spring 1999), pp.343-377.

to a state of semi-withdrawal from the regional command structure. NATO (and the United States) did not mediate in good enough time to avert the Greek-Turkish split of 1955, and in subsequent years no serious effort towards arbitration was taken. No NATO country or official (with the notable exception of Secretary General Paul-Henri Spaak) was willing to intervene. As NATO did not constitute part of the 1959 Cyprus settlement and the Cypriot Republic was not included into the Alliance, the Southern Flank was not extended eastwards to stabilise politically the delicate situation to prevent internal collapse, Makarios' turn to the non-aligned movement, or the revival of Greek-Turkish antagonism in the future.

Thus, this thesis argues that during the 1950s the Southern Flank (and especially the Greek-Turkish fronts) was primarily an exercise in achieving political stability in depth and in denying crucial regions and waterways to the Soviets, rather than producing an effective military strategy. On the military level, NATO planners hoped that Italy could be held (at least, with the same enormous difficulties that applied to the Central Region), but Greece could not, and Turkey could only partially be defended. Furthermore, Greece and Turkey, the poorest members of NATO, were in no position to meet the high qualitative standards that NATO was putting forward. Last but not least, NATO and US nuclear deterrence was not enhanced in the Southern Flank until after 1959 when tactical nuclear weapons were integrated in the Greek and the Turkish armed forces. This meant that militarily the Southern Flank remained the weakest spot of the Atlantic Alliance. On the other hand, on the political level, NATO's success was remarkable. Greece and Turkey were secured for the West; Cold War deterrence meant that, despite the apparent defence problems, the Soviet road to the Mediterranean was blocked, except in the case of total war. Last but

not least, NATO membership and western deterrence arguably also played a stabilizing role in the relations between Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria: in a Cold War context it was unthinkable for these states to initiate bilateral conflicts which had proved so common in the past. In other words the Southern Flank was a case where a defensive alliance scored a major political success.

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